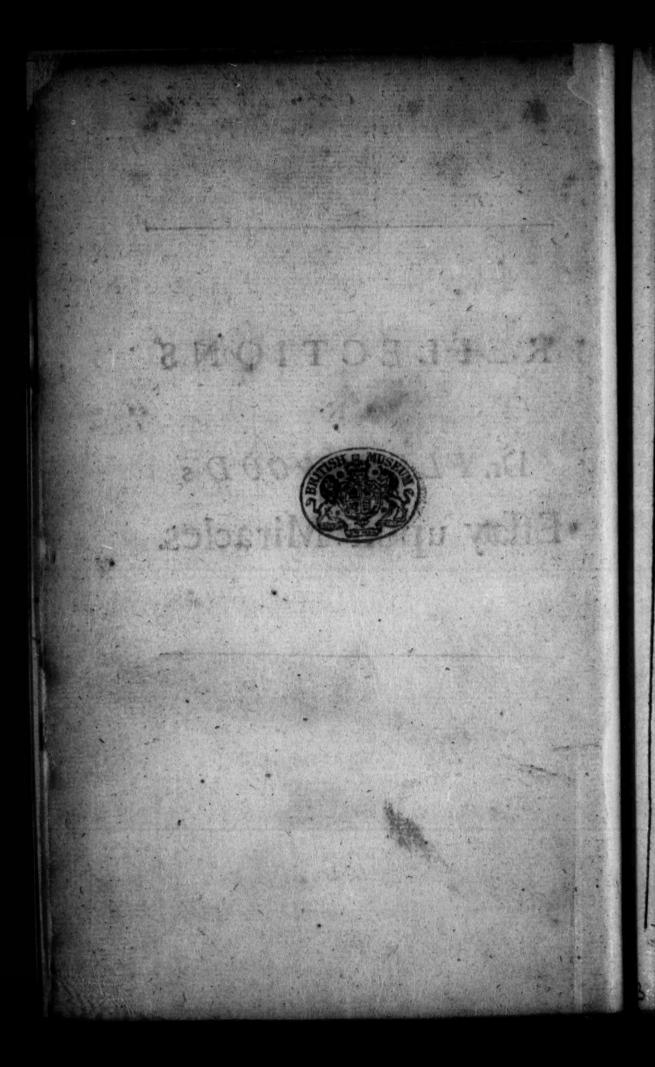
John Bearing

### REFLECTIONS

ON

Dr. FLEETWOOD's

Essay upon Miracles.



#### REFLECTIONS

ON

Dr. FLEETWOOD's

### ESSAY

UPON

#### MIRACLES:

Shewing the

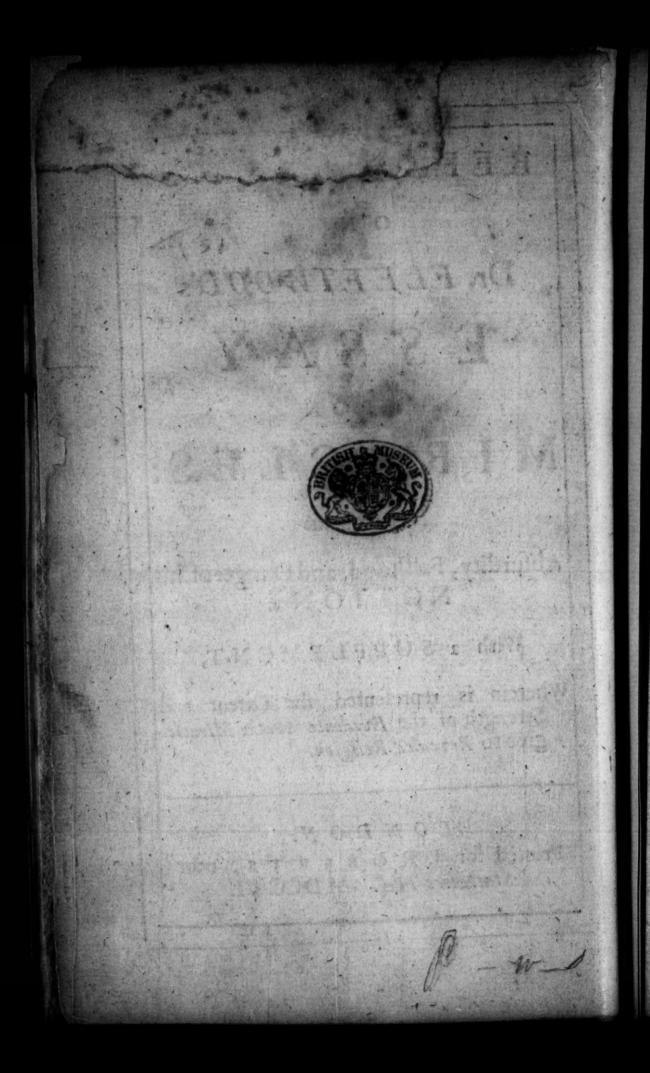
Absurdity, Falshood, and Danger of his NOTIONS.

With a SUPPLEMENT,

Wherein is represented the Extent and Strength of the Evidence which Miracles give to Revealed Religion.

LONDON:

Printed for J. R O B E R T S, near Stationers-Hall. M DCCVI.



## PREFACE.

T my first Reading the Estay upon Mirauce Some time ago, I was much surprized at many Novelties, and such as I thought Errors in it; of dangerous Consequence to Religion. Infomuch, that although I could not allow my self to suspect a Person of that Author's Character of any Design to undermine the Foundations of Religion; whilst, pretending to write in its Defence, be laid aside, and indeed as much as lay in him removed the Old Sound Principles upon which it hath hitherto stood, supporting it with New but Weak Props : Howbeit, as I thought Religion to stand best settled upon the Ancient Foundations, I hoped, this being a Thing of Importance, some Person of Learning or other, zealous for Religion

and its Truth, would soon undertake to shew the World this Author's Mistakes, and vindicate their solid Principles upon which the Christian Religion hath hitherto stood unshaken, notwithstanding the Attempts of Atheists and Deists, which shall never remove it from its Basis. And if this were not done by some Better and more Able Hand in the way I purposed my

felf to do something touteds it.

Having this in Thought, a little while after I met with Mr. Jenkins's Observations on the Life of Apollonius Tyanzus; wherein I found some notice taken of the Principles which the Estay goes upon, (tho without naming the Author, or the Book) and several Arguments well urged to shew the Weakness of these New Principles, upon which the Estay would fix the Author rity of Miracles; which stood much better (as is likewise there shewn) upon the Ancient Foundations. This made me lay aside my Purpose for that time. But afterwards confidering, that perhaps Those Observations might not be taken to be a full Answer to the Estay, there not being therein

therein full Solutions given to all the Difficulties (which the New Hypothesis does pretend, can be no other way folved than by it (elf) concerning the Nature of Miracles, and the Extent of their Proof; so that the Author of the Essay might be apt to think himself not much concerned, nor pressed with what therein was said against him: And I coming likewise in Conversation, to be the New Principles of the Essay much taked of by some such as I had but too much cause to look upon as no great Friends to Religion; (who made an Use thereof contrary, I presume, to any Intention of the Author of the Estay, but dangerous, as I conceived, to Revealed Religion, the Evidences whereof, 'twas bence argued, must be somewhat uncertain:) I hereupon began again to think twas necessary this Essay should have a full Answer, as well for our seeing in a clear Light the Strength and Certainty of that Proof which Miracles give to Revealed Religion; as to solve the Difficulties and Objections that occur, (or that 'tis pretended do occur between our View and it; so as to make this Proof appear to us dark and perplexed, while these remain to render it obscure and exceptionable.) And indeed, I could not be satisfied in my self, until I fet upon this Design with Resolution; having bestowed no little Consideration on the Subject; and yet finding my felf no wifer than one of those whom the Author of the Eslay is pleased to call Unconsidering People, who may suspect sooner than approve the Concessions he has made to the Adversaries of Revealed Religion; which I not only think to have been made by him without either Reason or Necessity, but also that if allowed, the Damage which Religion will receive thereby, is no less than the Shaking of its whole Foundation.

For as to this Author's undertaking from Reason and Revelation, as he pretends (though much of the Scripture that he useth, will appear, I doubt, to be used by him in a Sense different from what the Christian World bath hitherto understood it in) to introduce a New Doctrine amongst us concerning Miracles, (which are the

great Proof upon which all Revealed Religion depends) contrary to what all Divines, whether Ancients or Moderns, have hitherto taught; I cannot but look on it as a very bold and surprizing Attempt: Tho' this felf-presuming Conceit of his doing otherwise and better, as he calls it, would have been excusable with me, notwithstanding the Novelty and Singularity of his Notions, had this Author been pleased to have allowed the old Arguments for the Truth of our Religion, to have stood good against its Adversaries, and added his own Thoughts as a further Help and Strength to its Cause. But bis Free and Bold Cen- Effay, Epift. sure of all Divines before bim, (" Some, Ded. as he says, " for their downright begging Pag. 2. "the Question in debate; others for Neg-"ligent and Slight Solutions of Considera-" ble Difficulties; others for attributing " so great a Power to the Devil, as he "judgeth utterly inconsistent with the " maintenance of Christianity upon the Foot " of Miracles; and most of em for leaving "us Schemes very defective in some Parts, " and very indefensible in others):" And espe-

especially his Attempt to render a great deal of that which has been said in the Cause of Religion, weak and contemptible, I can by no means think to be excufable. For a Divine surely cannot be thought to go the right way to give fatisfaction to the Unbelieving World (which is this Author's Pretence) by rendring questionable the Proofs of Religion generally used to convince Gainsayers, in favour of New Notions before not thought of in the Christian World; of whose Truth and Strength, consequently, he could have no assurance. Such an one must be rather thought to go in dangerous By-Paths, not to be followed by any that are wife: And if be meet with no Censure for that which seems to signifie too great an Indifference in Religion, he will owe it to the Charity of those who hope or believe well of his Intentions.

There will be somewhat the more Trouble in dealing with this Author from his Way of Writing in Dialogues; wherein, as an Author may use a great deal of Foul Play,

Play, if he has a mind either not candidly to propose the Opinions and Arguments of Adverse Parties in the Persons of the Dialogists, or to represent Persons Opinions and Practices invidiously and contemptuously, or to conceal and shelter himself in Ill and Unworthy Suggestions, or to seduce his Unwary Readers; so be has some Advantage from the Perplexity and Trouble it creates to any one that shall go about to answer him; who must follow him throughout his Dialogues, and be at pains more than ordinary to pick out his Sense, and Meaning, and Arguments. But the latter I can excuse, if so be I find nothing of Craft and Design in this his Method: In case I should, he must allow me to use what Skill I have to detect it.

There are some very Tedious Repetitions in which I am forced to follow this Author; he says, the Nature of his Work led him to them; and I am concerned to follow him, that the Answer may not be excepted against, as imperfect.

is

ul

y,

#### The PREFACE.

thor will find, but that as I have taken upon me to Answer his Book, I shall do it in a manner becoming him and me. I shall spare him in all Cases but where I think Truth injured, or the World imposed upon, or him endeavouring to impose upon it.

- the first the first the first and the arms

their country to the following to a such

erical in the California water and in

terror I can towalf, if he to I feel nothing

The see for a transmit the second

Marked Line to them a cold forecome

ed to follow him, that we distance and and

be excepted to be by the week

and the court and the

DEGI 7 DEGI 7

And and the part of the Manne

the same of the sa

# REFLECTIONS

Marclet unless he know of force enabless

Thefions on an Estar

" der gever to much et it, having nover "heated non teen the like, no, it may be

Sal bal llaw O N A Natura modeliw es

# Estay upon Miracles.

Thus far I will agree with him, that a Mi-

HE Author of the Essay upon Mi-racles is pleased to tell us what a Miracle is, namely, "An Extra-Essay, "ordinary Operation of God, against P.2. " the known Course and settled Laws of Nature, " appealing to the Senses: Or he will be content that we should take Mr. Hobbs's Definition, viz. A Work of God beside his Operation by the Way of Nature ordained in the Creation. Of which Definitions (or rather of Pag. 3. the first of them, for the latter will not serve his Purpose so effectually) he thinks to serve himself thus far, namely, that he may conclude hence, that "nothing new, strange, " prodigious and aftonishing shall be ac- Pag. 4. "counted properly Miraculous, unless it "thwart the Common Course of Nature, " and overthrow some settled Law of the "Creation: So that although a Man won-" der

"der never so much at it, having never heard nor seen the like, nor, it may be, any one else, yet he is not to account it a "Miracle, unless he know of some establish-"ed Law of Nature that is subverted by it. And of this he makes great Use to himself throughout his Book. But if it shall appear that his Desinition of a Miracle is salse, as well as without Authority, then as well the Inserence which he here makes from it, as whatsoever else he builds upon it, must fall together with it.

Thus far I will agree with him, that a Miracle is an Extraordinary Operation befides and out of the Way of Nature, and that there is an Appeal in it to the Senses, or rather to the Reason and Sense of Mankind; as well in reference to the Truth of the Fact, of which our Bodily Senses are the Judge, astouching its being above all Human Power, and all Natural Causes known and visible to us, wherein our Reason judgeth of the kind of fuch Fact, taking into its help the Experience and Observation of others, together with our own. But I cannot allow him, that nothing should be thought a Miracle, but what is against the Course of Nature, and ab-Solutely contrary to the settled Laws thereof. I will give him an Instance of a Thing that he shall not be able to deny its being a Miracle, because he shall find it appealed to by one of the Lord's Prophets, for the Proof of his mas - 53

his being a Man of God, and even for a Proof of the Lord's being the God, that is, the only and the True God; which yet will not appear to be against the Course of Nature, nor Subverting of any Law thereof For that Things the fame in Kind, though not in Cir-Tin T for cumstances, have hapned in Nature, and may be accounted for from Causes in Nature; namely, the Fire from Heaven, that Elijah called for to confume the Sacrifice, in his Contest with the Prophets of Baal; as also to destroy the Captains with their Fifties, fent by the King to feize him. This was undoubtedly a Miracle, being proposed by the Prophet in one Case, and affented to by the People as a Proof of that Nature, who could not refuse to agree, that he which answered by Fire, should be ac- i Kings knowledged to be the God whom only they 18. v. 24. ought to worthip: And in the other Cafe, the Words of the Prophet are a plain and express Appeal to it as fuch; If I am a Man of God, let Fire come down from Heaven and de- Kings i. from thee and thy Fifty. Yet furely it is not v. 10. a Thing against the Course of Nature, for Fire or Lightning to fall from Heaven, and destroy Men sometimes, as well as at other times burn Things that are combustible. This Instance cannot but shew his Definition of a Miracle to be groundless and false. I am willing to observe here also, that the Auther of the Essay does not think fit always to judge

I

it

i-

y

of

is

#### Reflections on an Essay

Essay, 2d Part, p. 100.

r Kings

22 . 4 . 8 :

-1 thaiR i

judge of Miracles according to his own Del finition, viz Its being a Thing contrary totbe known, constant, fettled Comfe of Nature ! For he fays, touching an Inflance mention ed by himself, i.e. Habbakuk's being convey d through the Air by the Angelo" That he should "not have thought it to be a Miracle, because; for ought the knew, the Natural Powers of the Angel might suffice for that, or a greater Purpole ; but that if a Man indeed should bean up another Man, and carry him through the Air, he should con-"clude this Action to be miraculous a "Let him tell me whether a Man's being conveyed through the Air so without any thing to support or bear up his Body be not a thing which from Experience and Observation, as well as from Reason, we must conclude not possible in Nature : If for then it must be a Miracle according to his own Definition By whom effected is another Question: Het that Power be what it will, the Action is one and the same. That one Man cannot do this for another, I grant him, and more than this, namely, that a Man cannot convey himfelf through the Air: Therefore if I should fee this last done, I account it a Miracle; and if I fee the other done, it is still but a Miraculous Work; and the Reason why both the one and the other are accounted such, is only this, that I know some Invisible Power must assist in both. He says indeed, That fupSupposing he knew it to be an Angel, he should not think it to be a Miracle, because for ought he knew, an Angel's Natural Power might effect it. He might with as much Reason have said, he should not think it to be a Miracle, if he knew that God himfelf wrought it, because there can be no doubt but his Estential Power sufficeth for it : Nothing can be faid to be a Miraele as to God, nor is any thing a Miracle as to that Power which is known able to do it: A Miracle is an Action that in it self, or its Circumstances, is a Sign to us of the Presence or Operation of some Invisible or Supernatural Power. To suppose or argue an Action of this nature not to be a Miracle, if the Power whose Presence is fignified to us by affifting in it, can be thought able of it felf to do it, is meer Nonfense; for the Power that affifteth to it, must be thought able to do it, otherwise how should it be done? The Fallacy lies in the Word Miracle, which this Author fancies must be an Action always above the Power of the Agent, or how should it be thought a Miracle? That is, in his Judgment, a Work that one would wonder, and should have cause to wonder such an Agent should do: Whereas indeed a Miracle is a Wonder only in reference to us and the Instrumental Agent; in reference to the Efficient Cause, the Power working or affifting to it, 'tis only a Sign given us of its Presence and Operation; which

e

S

n

8-

d

e;

a

th

is

er

apt

ip-

6

which Power, however aftonishing it may be to us, who understand not the way of its O-peration, must be thought able to do what it does : And if its being supposed so able, would make the Thing no Miracle, then were a Miracle impossible. My Meaning, perhaps, may be better expressed by shewing the thing in the Instance we are upon, viz. A Man's being convey'd through the Air, would be to us the Spectators a Wonder: Should the Man himself be the Instrument of this his Conveyance, this would still be to us a Wonder: Suppose (as we know he must be assisted by some Power therein) we knew the Power affifting him to be that of God, it might be still wonderful to us in one fense, as a thing unusual, and beyond our apprehension, as to the way, and manner; but the Wonder would cease, in respect of the Power doing it, because we have all reafon to think the Power of God able to effect it; Yet would it not still be a Miracle, even after we knew God's Power sufficient for it? (The Case is the same, let it be any other Power that affisteth to it:) If after'tis known that the Power is sufficient for it, it be not still a Miracle, then there could be no such Thing. I have continued too long upon this, but with defign to shew, that as this Author's Definition of a Miracle cannot be true, so his Notions are not clear to himself, he knows not a Miracle that falls under his own Defi-Therenition.

Therefore to fet us right at the beginning, if we must find a Definition for a Miracle, it ought to be fuch as may comprehend all those MiraculousWorks which have been wrought by Persons sent of God to prove God's being with them of a truth. And these seem to be of several kinds; (1.) Some there are which we have great reason to judge the Effects of an immediate Divine Power, as feeming to Human Judgment above all Natural Means and Causes; such is thought the Raising of the Dead,&c. (2.) Some again are fuch as might, we may think, possibly be done by Natural Means, but yet appear evidently, in the particular Case, not done by any such Means, but by fome Superior Power; as the fudden and present Cure of dangerous, violent or inveterate Diseases, as a Violent Fever in its Paroxysm, the Palsie, Leprosie, or the like, cured with a Word or Touch. (3.) Some again, fuch as Natural Means feem to have been used about, but such Means as are no ways disposed in their Nature to produce fuch Effects; as our Saviour's curing of the Blind with his Spittle and Clay; of the Deaf and Dumb, by putting his Finger into the Ear, and touching the Tongue with his Spittle. (4.) Others, such as were done by Natural Means, disposed for the Effect, but not immediately, or presently disposed for it; not at the command, nor under the Power of the Agent, working by them neverthe-B 4

less at his Pleasure; as Fire from Heaven, falling and consuming the Sacrifice, or destroying Men, therefore miraculous, because falling at the Word of the Prophet: The Storm at Sea ceasing upon our Saviour's rebuking the Wind: The Draught of Fishes caught upon the letting down the Net at his

Word, &c.

All these agree in this, that they are aut of the way of Nature, and above the Power of it; Circumstances, or the nature of the Things considered: They are Works that neither Nature, nor the Powers of Nature concur to effect; which in those Circumstances, at least, Natural Causes could not have wrought, but as helped, or excited by some Power extraordinary.

Perhaps this Author will say, That only the first of these are properly Miracles: Let him then give a Reason why God or his Prophets should use the rest at all. Either they are Miracles, or to no purpose used, to

no purpose pretended to.

Were I therefore to give a Definition of a Miracle, it should be this; "An Extraordi-" nary Operation out of the way of Nature, "and above the Powers of it, the Circum"stances of the Ast considered, appealing to

"the Sense and Reason of Mankind.

And now we come to some of our Author's Questions, viz. Are we sure that all Miracles are the Operations of God? Can no Cre-

ated

Effay, P. 5.

0

ated Being work a Miracle ? To which he gives this Answer, That "no Created Being can work a Miracle by its own Inberent " Power and Virtue, (I suppose he means by its own Natural or Essential Power) but by a Delegated Power (I presume he "means communicated) it may: And thus "the meanest of Created Beings may do it, "if God so please." Thus far I shall agree with him, That the meanest of Created Beings may do it by a Communicated Power; but that no Created Being hath Natural Powers for it, I doubt is but precariously said; it being a Thing that neither he nor I can speak absolutely nor positively of, unless we knew certainly what the Natural Powers of all Created Beings are. A Man indeed cannot work a Miracle, without fome Power communicated to him; for the Work must be, and appear evidently to be above Human Power, at least in the Circumstances of its doing, or 'tis not to be accounted a Miracle. But whether Man be affisted always in doing that which is above Human Power, by God himself alone, or may not be asfifted by fome Inferior Being (having Natural Powers beyond those of Man) to do Things, which being done by Man, affifted by a Power invisible, are to be accounted miraculous; is the proper Question in this Case to be asked. And whether the Invisible Power that doth affift, doth thus affift

by its own Natural Power, or by a Communicated Power, is very little to the Matter in hand; that is to fay, the Enquiry, whether in all Miracles, the Hand that affifteth Man to work them, be that of God. For if another Spirit does affift, unless I can find some other Expedient, to know that this Spirit hath not a Natural Power but Communicated, besides the Work that is before me, I may be deceived by the Miracle, so as to take it to be of God, when it is not; or not to take it to be of him, when it is. Therefore all that he obferves of the " Creature's being God's Instru-"ment in the Working of Miracles, so as "when the most Superior Angel works a "Miracle, it is no more his own Work, "than a Miracle wrought by the meanest "Man would be his"; (which yet I think is no Consequence, the Natural Powers of the one being undoubtedly much greater than the Natural Powers of the other;) is nothing at all to the Business. The Purpose being to enquire, Whether Man is always affifted by God in the Work of a Miracle; or whether he may not fometimes be affifted by some other invisible Being? If the latter may be, what is it to our purpose to know in the general, that when God works it, he does it by his Essential Power; but when another Spirit works it, this Spirit doth it, not by a Natural, but by a Communicated

municated Power; or if it does it by a Natural, even that Ability is derived from the Creator? All this was known to every one before the Author's Pains about it; and after all he has faid, we are but as wife as we were before. Another Spirit may affift Man to work a Miracle, perhaps by its Natural, or perhaps by a Communicated Power; but whether by one or the other, we cannot distinguish from the Thing we see before us, and therefore 'tis to us the same Thing, let it be which it will; and we are left still to seek the Means of knowing whether the Power affifting be God, or fome other.

The further Questions which our Author directs his Scholar to ask him; viz. " How Effay, "can you tell but Spiritual Beings (good P.5, 6.6. " or bad ) may by the Laws of their Cre-" ation, be Masters of such Force and Sub-"tilty, as to be able to work Miracles? " And if they be endued with fuch a Pow-" er, how can we know whether or when "they exercise it? Or how can we distin-" guish their Operations from those of God? These Questions, with only adding to the Supposition of their being endued with fuch a Power, whether Natural or Communicated, (which is indeed all the same Thing as to us, who fee the Effect only of their Power, but are without the Means of knowing whether the Power it self is Natural

effied

or Communicated) are material indeed, and truly to the purpole. And therefore; I should have been glad to have seen a direct Answer given by our Author to them: But this we must wait for, and take for the present what he is pleased to give us. Which is this: "No Power less than that " of God, can unfettle that established "Course of Nature, which no Power less "than his, could fettle and establish." Here I must fay, (1st.) That his Answer goes upon a wrong Supposition; that is, that all Miracles are against the common Course of Nature, and a Subversion of its settled Laws; which therefore I left out in the first of these his Questions, as being not proved by him, and therefore a groundless Supposition. But (2dly.) admitting it for a while; To make himself understood, he should have first told us what the established Course of Nature is, that he means: However, be it what it will, to make good his Position, he must prove to us, That God intended fo to establish the Course of Nature, as that it should never be altered nor changed. And then I would have him to remember, that fuch a Supposition is made use of by a certain Person (with whom I have fome Suspicion he may be acquainted) to prove, That there never was, nor can be any such thing as a Miracle; for that it must imply Mutability in God; which is abfurd, and

The Author of the Tractatus Theologo-Politicus, and not to be supposed possible. On the other hand, allowing, as he must, that the Course of Nature may admit of Alterations, why must it necessarily be, that no Power less than his who made it, may alter it? I should be apt to think, a less Power might unsettle or alter that, which would require a greater first to settle and put it in order. But, hear this Author's Reasons.

(1.) He says, "It would argue a Defect Estay, " of Power or Wisdom in God, to leave Pag. 6 "the Laws of his Creation at the Will and "Mercy of Created Beings: This would " not be to be the Supreme Director, Lord "and Governor; but to have Rivals, "Checks, nay, and Controllers of his Will " and Empire." Right; if God did not himself always govern and over-rule the Powers of all Created Beings, fo as they shall only make such and no other Alterations in the Course of Nature, than himfelf shall think fit to permit and fuffer Admit but this; (which is the Supposition which they will require of others, as well as that which they go on themselves, who think Miracles are sometimes wrought by other Powers than that of God; ) and what becomes of our Author's Argument? If these can do nothing but what God will permit and fuffer, the Laws of his Creation are not left to their Will and Mercy, tho' left subject to such Alterations as God may

-rade him to vork them.

permit and fuffer them to make therein: Neither are these Supreme Directors in the World, nor Checks upon the Power of God, nor Controllers of his Empire; so long as God governs in the World as Supreme, over-ruling their Powers, restraining and controlling them at his pleasure; these going and acting nevertheless so far as he gives them Liberty and Permission, but no farther.

Thid.

(2.) He fays, "There could be no use " made of Miracles, if any one but God " could work them." Add but his own Words, independently on him, and at their pleasure, and I might allow it him to be a Truth, but nothing at all to his purpofe. The reason why I allow this that he says, (taking the whole together) is, Because if other Powers could work Miracles at their pleasure, I could not find, at the first, means to diftinguish the Spirit and Power of God, from other Spirits and Powers doing the like Works: But when I see another that is not able to do them at its pleasure, I conclude it for this reason not to be the Power of God; because I see its Power limited, or restrained and controlled. And if so be, that there can be found a Way, by this means, or indeed by any other, to know when it is the Spirit and Power of God that worketh them; the Use of Miracles will remain the same, even supposing others be-· fide him to work them. But

But to this he further fays, "That Miracles could not manifest a Divine Pow-"er, if any less could work them; nor could they attest to any one's being sent " from God, if any other than God could " exercise such Power; because they might "proceed from one as well as the other. As to the former part of his Argument, That Miracles could not manifest a Divine Power, if any less could work them; I grant it; putting in but these Words, at all times, and in the same measure and manner: But then it would be nothing to our Author's Purpose; for the Manner, and Measure, and Circumstance of Time, would manifest the Divine Power, and distinguish it from the less. For if the Power of God work greater Miracles than the other is able to do; or if the others are limited in their Power, and controlled at the Pleasure of God, or his Agents; the greater Effects, and the Acts of an unlimited Power, shall manifest the Divine Omnipotent Power of God, and distinguish it from the Power of Damons, that may work Miracles when God does (or shall) think fit to permit them; but not independently on him, or at their own pleasure. Therefore in the latter part of his Argument, there is just nothing at all; because the Person sent from God may posfibly be differred by fuch Effects and Acts, as may appear to be the Works of an uncontrolled given

controlled and unlimited Power: Neither have I need to mention as yet the other Marks that may be found to distinguish them. If there be any fure Mark, (as pearing limited and controlled, and thereby inferior; the other unlimited and unconfined it felf, but able to reftrain and controll others, to which it therefore must be Superior; I infift upon to be one certain Mark for our diffinguishing them : ) then all his Argument is at an end, and fignifies just nothing. Neither is his Argument from the Similitude of a Prince's Seal any thing as yet to his purpose; for a bare Power to work a Miracle, and an unlimited Power of working them, are not the same; but differ as much as a Counterfeit Seal does from the True, and are diftinguishable by a careful Inspection.

Effay, Pag. 7. But after all this great ado, the Inference that this Author dares as yet make, is no more than this: "That none but God can "work Miracles of his own inherent Pow-"er and Virtue; or if Created Spirits had "that Power given them by God, yet that "they could not exercise it but by Permissi-"on and Appointment." Every Tittle of this shall be granted him; but not the least Use shall he be able to make of it to his purpose. "Whether any such Power as "this hath been, or may at some time, be "given

" given to Greated Spirits by God; and "why; is a Matter that he will refer to "further Enquiry." And I am content it be to left; only let him not then as yet affirm, or let it be understood that it is without any reason hitherto given, that he does take upon him to affirm, "That none but take upon him to affirm, " God doth, or can work Miracles." indeed can always work them, and by what Agents and Instruments he sees fit; but this our Author has not yet made it appear, That whet foever Man worketh any, is the immediate Instrument of God, and not the Agent (it may be) of some other Power. But here it's thought seasonable to ask; "Whether it be proper to prove the Being Ibid. " of a God by Miracles, to fuch as believe "there is no fuch Thing in the World? (Let me explain it by putting in, That is to fay, to fuch as believe there is no God in the World; or else I am sure it must be a very improper Queltion.) And to this we have for answer; "Miracles do certainly "prove the Being of him who works them, because nothing can act that does not "exist: But properly speaking, they rather Suppose than prove the Being of a God. I would not willingly entertain a causless Suspicion; but I cannot see how it could be in the least seasonable, nor how it should be serviceable at all to the Purpose this Author had in hand, to propole at all, much less

to

to answer this Question after the manner he does. Surely he cannot have any Intention to favour herein any of those bold Writers, that have taken upon them to affirm, "That we cannot from Miracles appre-"hend either the Essence, Existence, or "Providence of God; which, if under-"flood at all, are to be understood from the fixed and settled Course and Order of "Nature." I will allow them and this our Author, that the Being of God is clearly proved from the Works of the Creation, formed by an infinite Wifdom and Power, and preferved in a constant Regularity and Order. But does not this Author know, there have been Men in the World that have pretended hence to argue quite the contra-"That the World is Eternal; for that the Course of Nature hath continued the " fame without Interruption ?" Doth he not also know, that there are even now perverse Disputers, that impute all Things to Nature and its fixed Course, and by this endeavour to exclude a Deity out of the World? And are not those left without excufe, and cut off from all pretence, when the Omnipotent Power of God shall appear in the Interruption of Nature's Course, as well as it doth in the Establishment thereof? Why is it then that this Author does tell us, that Miraeles suppose rather than prove; and that by these we can bardly convince? Let

Effay, Pag. 8.

Detail not thus lofe our Arguments; that must convince an Atheistical World. If that which supposes does not also prove, and that properly speaking in the Case we are up on; how does the Course of Nature, that is conflamen and the Works of the Greatist on prove? These prove the Reing of a Gods only as an Effect provesvits Cause; that is the Effect supposing the Caule, in that this could not be without that, is a Proof of it; because the Existence of the one which we fee, necessarily supposeth, that is maketh us of necessity to suppose, the Existence of the other, though we see it not. I wish this Author had express'd himself more largely therefore and plainly, when he owns at the last, "That Miracles may be properly produced, to prove the Being " of a God to some fort of People, and in fome Cases. I hope he would not go about to fuggelt, what is faid boldly and atheiltically by fome, who I think first gave the World the Hint of this; i.e. That Miracles are a Proof only to some fort of People; that is, fay they, to the Superstitious and Credulous only. Our Author furely has confidered, that the Proof is good to all, though all indeed may not have need of it, many being convinced without it.

At length we are come with our Author to the principal and undeniable Use of Miracles; which is said to be, and which Isid.

C 2

11

et

e Y 19971

with

with him I agree to be " The Attefting to "the Mission of any Messenger of God, to give him Credit with those to whom: "he is fent." As for instance; The Power of Miracles which was given to Moses, to give him Credit with the Jews as well as with the Ægyptians. Of which the Scripture hath given us a very plain Account in the Places cited, viz. Exod. 4. v. 1. and Cap. 8. v. 9. where 'tis very plain and clear, "That the Power of Working Mi-" racles, which God entrusted Moses with, "was given him to testify his Mission; to witness to the Hebrews that he came " from God, as well as to Pharaoh, that he "came to him with God's Message.

But here now comes the great Objection that will hardly be well answered, (thinks our Author's Scholar) namely, "That Jan-

"nes and Jambres, Ægyptian Sorcerers
"and Enchanters, when they were called
before the King and Court, to see what

"they could do, threw down their Rods,

"which were also turned to Serpents: They also turned Waters into Blood; and likewife brought up Frogs upon the Land.

"How could Moses's Miracles then prove

"his Mission from God; and why is he more to be believed than the Magicians;

" fince they also wrought Miracles ?

Here our Author promifeth the Answers that are generally thought best; but to deal freely,

Effay, Pag. 10.

Pag. 11.

Pag. 12.

Ibid.

freely, (he fays) "they are not fully fatif-"factory." He might have spoken his Opinion plainly, and faid, they are not at. all fatisfactory; and the World would have fooner excused his Attempt to ridicule them First then, he tells us, 'tis said in answer-"That the Rods of the Agyptian Sorcer-"ers were not turned into real but appear-"ing Serpents; and that the Devil helped " his Servants in this Cafe, to impose upon "the Senses of the Standers-by." And upon this, his Scholar must take upon him the Person of an Agyptian, one of Pha-raoh's Court, and reply; "That this An-"swer begs the Question; for you say, Mo-" fes's Rod being turned into a Serpent, " gives a Testimony to his Mission, and " shews that he came from God: But here " are Jannes and Jambres that deny his Mif-" fion, and have turned their Rods into Ser-" pents as well as he. 'Tis faid, our Senfes " are deceived and imposed upon by Diabo-" lical Illusions in their Case; we may say " the same in the Case of Moses. You "judge by your Senses, that Moses's Rod " was turned into a real Serpent; the Æ-"gyptians use their Senses also, and to them "their Sorcerers Rods are turned into Ser-" pents." What can be answered in favour " of Moses, that might not be honestly ap-" plied to James and Jumbres also?" Herein, I doubt, there will appear a little more

Art than Sincerity, in this Writer of Dialogues. I suppose, he has not frequently met with this Answer, given by Men pretending to fay and give the Reafon, Why Moses should be believed rather than the Magicians of Ægypt. The Answer that would be given in that Case to the direct Question, is undoubtedly this; viz. That it appears in the whole Transaction, that Moles acted by a greater Power than they; That their Miracles could not stand in competition with his: They found the Power affifting them limited and restrained by the other, and so were forced to acknowledge him to act by a Power Superior to that which affifted them: And that the Opposition of these Magicians for a while, and their being at length forced to yield and give over, rendred the Miracles of Mofes a more undeniable Testimony, and shewed therein the Finger of God. But that Answer which this Author is pleafed to give us, is, I may almost fay, a Reply of his own making, though he gives it us as the usual known Reply of others. His difingenuous Dealing therefore appears so much the more, when he quotes no Author for this Answer, but employs his Scholar to render it ridiculous: Whether it be without design of giving Advantage to the Adverfaries of Religion, the World must judge. at Jeght, there wall appear a little inore

The same I must say of his Second An- Essay, swer, and what his Disciple is instructed to Pag. 1 fay upon that, viz. "The Devil's steal-'ing away the Sorcerers Rods, and in their " stead secretly conveying true Serpents. I fee no Author that he has quoted for this Answer, neither do I remember that I have met with it in my Reading: And therefore I am at a loss as to the Design and End which our Author must have, in giving this out for an Answer, and in rendring it ridiculous. I would fain fee, if I could, fair Dealing, and good Design in this. It shall not be enough for this Author to reply upon me, That several Writers in their giving account how those Miracles wrought by the Magicians might be effected by the Help and Power of the Devil, (whose Power they conceived not sufficient to do what the Magicians did to appearance) may have spoken to this purpose concerning the Delusions of that subtile Spirit. Let such Mens Conjecture be true or false, or even ridiculous, it's nothing to the Credit which Moses ought to have beyond the Magicians: For whether the Works of the Magicians were Real or Delusory, there was a sudden Stop put to their Power, which forced them to acknowledge a Supreme Power with Mofes, over-ruling that by which they acted; and this gives Credit to Moses. Those Men besides, that have offer'd at this Conjecture, radicipar

e

are

are very ill used, in being brought in to say those Things for an Answer to the Question, Why is Moses more to be believed than the Magicians? Which may have been spoken by them only in a way of Conjecture, to give some account how the Devil might affift them to do fuch Things, and yet have no more Power than they think him, that is to fay, not a Power to work real Miracles. I have not found any Writers that have put the Credit of Moses upon so weak an Issue, as the Truth of their own Conjectures of this kind: And though it might be faid of fome, that they virtually or confequentially have done it, by offering these Conjectures; it would be very hard to go about to charge them with, or fasten such a Consequence upon them. And even if that could be done, I should have no great Opinion of this our Author's Sincerity, who has pretended to produce these among the Answers that are thought the best in this Case generalb; whereas he cannot but himself know, these are so weak in the manner he has urged them, that any Man of Learning and Sense would be ashamed of them: I mean, of their being given as a Reason, Why Mofes sould have more Credit than the Magicians. 'Tis another thing to offer a Conjecture of this nature, in giving an Account, how such Things might be done by the Devil's Power. And this I cannot doubt but this Author

Author must well know; and therefore I blush for him, whilst I take this notice the no du contett thereof.

He need not have made fo great a Wonder, "That Learned Men should take so Pag. 15. " much pains to folve the Miracle of the " Rods, and fay little to the Two others, " which are as hard to be accounted for. Doubtless, they that thought themselves to have accounted for One, supposed they had done it for all Three; and that what would folve the one, would folve the other alfo. And what (he fays) the Ægyptian Courtier would reply upon them, in case they should have faid the Water was not turned into true Blood, nor real and substantial Frogs brought up, viz. How came it to pass that his Countreymens Senses were only to be imposed upon, and those of the Hebrews remained clear, and not to be deceived? would be thought most ridiculous to any that may have offered this Solution, as to what might be done by the Devil's Power. I believe that never any one that offered at this Conjecture, ever thought or ever pretended, but that the Senses of the Hebrews might be, and were imposed on, as well as the Senses of the Egyptians, if those Things which the Magicians did, were only delufory. If this Author will pretend to argue against this Conjecture that some Men have offered, "That the Magicians Rods were Pag. 14,

" True & 15.

f' True Serpents, and that our Senses are "not to be imposed upon; or if they may, "there is no Judgment to be made with "Certainty of any Miracles": Let him argue this as long as he pleafeth, I find my felf not at all concerned therein. It is no matter to me, which Hypothesis is true; that which supposeth them to be Real, or that which will have them to be Delufory; let but the Power affifting Moses be acknowledged Superior, and it sufficeth. I have no farther to do with either, but that the one as well as the other be rightly reprefented, and that no Consequence be drawn from the Weakness of either, to prejudice that Evidence which will stand good, without our fixing upon either the one or the oother. ino brow

Pag. 15.

Moses's Serpent eating up the other Serpents, has not generally been urged, that I know of, to that purpose this Author intimates, in proof that his was a Real Serpent, the others not: Though I take it indeed to be some Evidence of a Superiority of Power in Moses, that he was able to overcome the Magicians. And this I take to be the Reason of the Mention which the Scripture makes thereof.

If any have offered this other as a difference between Moses and the Magicians, "That these turned Water into Blood, but in a less quantity; and that these brought up but

"but a few Frogs, whereas Mofes's Perfor-"mances of this kind were marvelloully "great:" It is but the Opinion of fome particular Men. I do not fee that the Scripture gives any Intimation of this Difference, or takes notice in the least thereof, to distinguish the one's Performance from the other's: And therefore I am no way concerned, if the Supposition do not hold good. However, admitting this Supposition true, that the Magicians could not do either of these Acts, to the degree, or after the manner that Mofes did them, I should think it rational to conclude from thence, that the one acted by a limited Power inferior to that of the other, which appeared able to act in a more wonderful manner than they. And had this Supposition been absolutely true, our Author need not have called for an Instance to be brought him of a Power that could act in a less, but could not act in a greater manner, or measure. And in this place, fince he has called for an Instance " to be "brought him of a Man or Spirit that can Effay, "make a Fly, and he will shew us that the " fame can make an Elephant; these Magicians shall be the Instance; who having done some Miracles, nevertheless could not do more; who even having done great Things, were not able to do little: Which is more strange than not to be able to do greater of the kind. These were unable to

0

0

1-

e

ne

re

15,

ut ip

ut

ag. 30.

turn Dust into Lice, though there be no more, but rather less appearing difficulty, even in our Author's Judgment, in this, than in fome at least of the others they had done before. Therefore is there no arguing from what in our Apprehension is more case or hard in Nature, so as to make a certain Conclufion thence, that the Power which can do one Thing out of the way of Nature, shall be able to do another. Let all Things out of the way of Nature feem to me alike impossible, or alike possible, How shall I by this be certain that they are fo in themselves? Can any thing certainly be determined of that whereof we have no certain apprehenfion? This Author therefore might have spared his Pains and Argument about that which cannot by us be understood out out and

All this while our Author feems to have industriously concealed the Answer generally given, and which taken right, is indeed the best Answer, viz. That Moses wrought more and greater Miracles, and did what the other could not. And this he still endeavours to conceal; for instead of mentioning this directly, he proposes a Thing taken notice of, 'tis true, by some Writers, but of which no notice is taken in Scripture; which is, "That the Sorcerers did not, or, as he "will have it, could not remove the Plagues" which they brought upon the Land, as Moses did. And thence he under a colour

n

it

1

-

0

11

it

is

f

1-

1-

h

e

l-d

it be

rs is

e

S,

ne

es.

as

ur

1-

infers that Mafes wrought the greater Mira-To which his Disciple is taught to reply, "That he fees herein that Mofes Pag. 17.5% "wrought mere, but he does not fee how "he wrough greater; for he does not fee "but it requires as much Power to make a "Little Serpent, as a Great one that can eat "him up; to turn fix Spoonfuls of Water "into Blood, as fix Quarts; and to bring "up Ten Frogs, as Ten Thousand. And this is to pass for good Reason, though at the same time there is not one Word of Anfwer given to the Thing in particular, observed and proposed, which was the Sorcerers not being able to remove the Plagues. I own indeed all that can be faid by those that made this Observation, to be precarious, because it does not appear to me in the Story, that the Magicians made any Attempt of this kind, and failed therein. But supposing they had attempted this, and failed in it, I cannot but be of Opinion, that a Reasonable Man must upon it have concluded, that Moses was affifted by a Power of greater Force, and likewise of greater Goodness. And not to leave any thing faid (how little foever to the purpose) without an Anfwer, I will adventure to fay, That whether he fees it, or not, a difference there is between an Act that shall remain, when others, pretended to be done in opposition, are no more, and are brought to nothing by that which

which they would oppole: This, I lay, as to Moles's Serpent cating up the other Ser pents; of which the Scripture has taken a notice; and for that notice take, I wish the Author had corrected his Difciple's Boldness. And though he may think it requires as great a Power to turn Six Spoonfulls of Water into Blood, as Six Quarts, yet if it had appear'd that this had been attempted by the Magicians, and that they had done it in a less, but could not do it in a greater quantity; that which should do the Work in a greater, must, I should think, by a Man of Reason, be acknowledged a greater Power than that which attempted to do farther, but could not. For as our Reason can conclude nothing of the Way and Manner by which the least Thing is done out of the Way of Nature, nor indeed scarcely of many Things that are done in Nature, 'tis by the Success only that any Judgment can be made of the Power; and thence a Man must necessarily judge that which continues to work, greater than that which fails in its Attempt.

But conclude this Author will, it seems, between him and his Disciple, upon that which he has said to little purpose hitherto, that there is no difference betwixt great and little Miracles. I nevertheless must be of another Opinion, having shewn what he has said, to have no Reason in it. As to one of

Pag. 17.

13

a

ne

ſs.

as

a-

ad

by

in

ın-

1 2

of

ver

but

ade

ich

of

ngs

ceis

the

rily

rk,

At-

ems,

that

rto.

and

e of

has

re of

119,

is indeed, we may hope as foon, and as eafily to do a Great Miracle as a little bes cause we can do neither; and know not but if any Power could affift us to do a little one, the fame might affilt us to do a great one But yet we know hot, again, on the other fide, but we might find in Experience the contrary; that affilting us to do the lefs, berhaps could not affift us to do a great; er; if that might happen to us which has happened to others, (as to the Magicians of Egypt, for Instance, who turned their Rods into Serpents, but could not rorn Duft into Life) there might be a Power permitted to affift us to do great Things, which much to our surprize should be found unable to assist us in Things of far less difficulty. 3 So much difference there is between a Finite and Infinite, between a Limited and an Unlimited Power; and yet even the Finite and Limited Power may be above sour compreherfion, able to do more than we know or thought fit to controll and puthraham

This Author may fay as often as he will,

"He who can make an Eel, can make a Effay,

"Dragon, if he please," This may be, P. 18.

for any thing I know; and with his leave,

it may not be for any thing he knows: And

if it be so, what is it to his Purpose? Put

the Case, the Creator's Infinite Power be required to the one as well as to the other,

shall it be impossible for the Creator to com-

muni-

municate of his Power to a Created Being to do the one, but that this Created Being shall have Power to do the other also? But our Author, it will be faid, is speaking of one that can by his own Power do the lefs, and means that fuch an one shall be able to do the greater. Truly tis well put in by his own Power, for he that acts by a Communicated Power, may, without doubt, be enabled to do the one, and not the other, and can do but as he is enabled. I may add to this also, that the Creator's Infinite Power can at any time limit fuch Natural Powers as he may have given to Created Beings; and confequently, that Power which is fo limited, though able to do the greater of it felf, if let alone; may not be able to do the less, if restrained within stricter Limits. And thus we fay it was with the Devil, who affifted the Magicians to the utmost of his Power, or at least to the utmost of his Permission syBut when the Almighty God thought fit to controll and put a stop to him, he could do no more: He could not do, nor affift them to do, that which was little, in comparison, to what by his Power and Help they had already done.

But I have passed over a Thing that is allowed and feen; which is, That Moses wrought more Miracles than the other. I Pag. 17. must not infinuate that out Author would conceal this; which he thus puts home to

-11101111

his Disciple, " Sure more Miracles will ar-"gue a greater Power than a few will. "What fay you to that?" Why truly the Disciple, according to the Principles wherein he has been instructed, is persuaded, that "More Miracles do not argue a greater Pag. 18. " Power than a few, but argue indeed a lar-" ger use, and more frequent exercise of the " same Power. He who works but one Mi-"racle, has as great a Power as he who has "wrought two; because he has the same, "though not fo long continued, or if you "will, not so often renewed to him." There has not as yet been one Word faid to prove that it was one and the same Power that affisted Moses, and that affisted the Magicians; and there is this Evident Reason to the contrary, That the Magicians wrought in oppofition to Moses, and 'tis not to be supposed that one and the same Power should act contrary to it felf. Is the Disciple then to impose upon the World first, to make way for the Master's imposing upon it hereafter? Let it be shewn first that Men are assisted only by One Power in the working Miracles, before this be prefumed; and this given as a Reason why more Miracles shall not argue a greater Power than few, because it is the Same Power. If we could suppose it were the same indeed, the doing more Miracles would only argue a larger use, and more frequent exercise of the Power; and another

0

S r-

d

0 ot

as

W -

is

ses

ald

to his

that did only a few, might be faid to have as great a Power, as having the same, tho' not fo long continued, or not fo often renewed; yet this would make some difference between the Men too; and it might be reasonable to acknowledge him that appear'd most favoured of this Power, which must be he that is most assisted by it, to have the best Credentials. However, this is not the Case, this is not to be presumed of Moses and the Magicians, at least not without any Reason given why it should; when there is so evident a Reason in the Case, (which is their opposition to one another) why this should not be presumed, nor in the least thought. Therefore to go on;

The working of many Miracles he allows to be " a thing that gives more opportuni-"ty for Men to be well affured that their "Senses are not imposed upon, and natural-"ly gains greater Authority." I should have liked this very well, had he not put in -" Yet that is only because more People " are concerned, and come to the know-" ledge of them." (And further) " For if "they were certainly perfuaded that one " was certainly wrought without Fraud, the "feeing more wrought by the same Person, "would give him no greater Authority with "them than he had before." Speak for your felf, Sir, not for all the People in the World; some of these will be apt to ask you toria.

you otherwile, how they shall be to well perfuaded that one was certainly wrought without Fraud, without their feeing further Acts wrought by the fame Perfon And tis likely they will fay further, That you have spoken nothing to the Case they are upon. They are fully perfuaded that Mefes wrought Miracles without Fraud; they are in some doubt, perhaps, whether the Magicians did theirs without Fraud, but they are not able certainly to prove it was only a Delufion, and therefore they must take it as though it were not. And give them a Reafon why they may not upon a view of the Contest which was between Moses and these Magicians, and the Things that came to pass in the Transaction, (namely, that Mofes wrought more Miracles than thefe, and that there, in what they did attempt, found a stop put to their Power, whereas Mofes went on with his Wonders) judge and determine from hence, that the Power affilting the one was limited, whilft the Power that affifted the other shew'd it self Omnipotent, and by that appeared to be, and must be deemed accordingly to be the Finger of God.

-

n

n

NS

nieir

al-

ald

in ple

-WC

r if

one the

fon,

with for

the

ask you

But here's a Case put, that 'tis thought must convince every Body: "If a Man Essay, "should see his Child raised from the Dead, "would he not as fully believe the Person who did it, as if he should see the same Man D 2

"Man raise also five more Children from the "Dead?" This is a shrewd Case put, because the Instance perhaps, itis thought, may be very affecting; It will not, however, so strongly affect, but that it shall be feen the Cafe is not fairly put; whilft this Case, as here put has reference only to the Same Man, and whilst supposing him to have raised one Child from the Dead, it does not enter into the Supposition of his attempting to raife more, and fail in that Attempt. I might besides argue, that the Case is not fairly put in such a Supposition as this, which prefumes concerning a Man whose Credit is doubtful, that he does one of the greatest Miracles; a Miracle of fuch a nature, that I do not know any Divine ever pretended it might be done by the Devil, or any of his Agents, and which I am apt to think will never be by good Testimony prov'd to have been done by any but the Lord's True Prophets. However, feeing this may admit of fome Argument, I shall not lay any great stress upon this Exception that I might take at his Instance : But admit the Instance, only requiring the Case to be put fairly upon it; that is to fay, That as Moses and the Magicians were several Men acting in opposition one against the other; and as these Magicians attempted to do after Moses, but failed therein at the last, and could go no further; fo let the Case be here put

put in this Instance, and two different Perfons supposed acting in opposition one against the other, and one of them raising a Child from the Dead, and after that a Tecond, and thus doing as often as he attempts, or is put upon attempting it; but the other doing it in one Case, and attempting to do the like again, but failing in that Attempt, and never able to do the Thing any more and then let the Question be asked, Whether a man would as fully believe him that was known thus to fail, as if he had been known to go on in his Power? Let me moreover ask which of the Two he would rather think and believe to be of God? Him that he should see restrained in his Power, by the other that wrought in opposition to him, or him that appeared to act by a Power unlimited and infinite? Indeed where there was no Opposition, and where there had appeared no Failure, I should believe a Man readi-Wthat should raise one Person from the Dead, because I should think he might be able to do the like in any Time or Cafe, but my Opinion must alter, if I knew in Fact of his attempting the same thing, and failing; and if I faw a direct Opposition in so great a Work as this, I should not know what to think, unless I could see some difference in the Powers, in the progress of their Work, by which it might appear whether the one were able to restrain the other. Dinoill

t

le

a-

er

or to

14

he

ng

all

ti-But

ase

hat Ien

er;

fter

and

iere

put

But

Effay, p. 9, and

But why do I argue folong in this Cafe, as one Man may reason and argue with another? and not rather reprove all this bold Reasoning against God ? Let a Scrip ture be confidered, of which our Author has himself thought fit to take as much as he found was for his Purpole; whereas had he taken and confidered the whole, it might have prevented all this vain and weak Argument, or left it at least to be seen in its proper Colour and Shape, See the Place, Exod. 4. 1. where when God was upon fending Moses to the Israelites in Agypt, we find Mofes Icrupulous, and questioning how he should get to have Credit with this People, and laying, But behold they will not believe me, but will fax, The Lord bath not appeared unto thee: And hereupon God bids him cast his Rod upon the Ground, and the Rod was turned into a Sergent : And bid him put forth his hand again, and take it by the Tail, and when caught, it became a Rod in his Hand again: And this that they might believe that the Lord God of their Fathers bad appeared unto him. And the Lord faid furthermore unto him, Put now thine Hand into thy Bosom; and he did so, and his Hand became Leprous: He bid him do it again, and it was turned as his other Flesh. Upon which Moses is told, that if the Israelites would not believe him upon the first, they would believe the Voice of the latter Sign: And if they

**should** 

Exod. 4. v. 3.

Ver. 8.

Birt

S

e,

t

10

S

d

6

9,

d

S

133

1,

S

8-

d

(

1-

d

d

t

20

-310H

should not believe these Two Signs, then is he directed to take of the Water of the Ri- Ver. 9. ver, and pour it upon the dry Land, and this should become Blood, that they might believe. And we are further told, that Moses did the Ver. 30, Signs accordingly in the fight of the People, and 31. and the People believed. If this Scripture be a Proof that the Power of Miracles given to Moses, was designed for the Testimony of his Mission, will it not also prove that his shewing a Second and a Third Sign made the Testimony the stronger, that God appointed his shewing one after the other for that very purpose, and that it gained him Authority accordingly. Let this Disputant then consider whether it be fit for him to argue after the manner he has; whether he better understands our Human Nature, than God that formed it; who himself ordered his Servant Mofes thus to proceed, in shewing Sign after Sign to gain him Authority with his People. It is not to be pretended that the Reason of this Order was, That the more People might come to the knowledge of this his Power; for the Order plainly refers to, and supposes the same Persons, who seeing the first Sign, would not however believe Ver. 8. nor hearken to the Voice of the first Sign, and who, perhaps, also might not believe the Two Signs, nor hearken to his Voice upon Ver. 9. them, without a Third, which he was in that Case to shew. And when Moses came

D 4

to

to make and shew the Signs that God had commanded him, it's faid he gathered together all the Elders of the Children of Ifrael, and did the Signs in the fight of the People, and the People believed; i. e. the several Signs were done one after another, in the fight of the same Persons that saw the first; and fo it could not be, that the Miracles might come to the knowledge of more People, but for the gaining the more Authority and Belief from the repeated Acts of Wonder and Power. And if there were occasion for this proceeding, whilst nothing was done in oppolition to Moses, how much more afterwards, when he was withstood by the Magicians. Let not this Disputant then presume to ask, but let it be accounted Boldness that he has taken upon him to speak after this manner, faying, "What Credit could the "Miracles of Moses give him, when the Ma-"gicians wrought the same in opposition to "his Authority, if Three Miracles argue as " great a Power as Thirty, and those Three " were attested by the same Senses the Thir-"ty were? 'Tis evident that Supposition is false, and groundless, and prophane; Three do not, cannot, in Reafon, argue as great a. Power as Thirty; and the supposing this must imply God himself to have not understood the Human Nature in the Direction that he gave to Moses, and in the Power given for executing thereof; It's a Thing, moremoreover that cannot but be evident to Sense and Reason, That a Power which may have wrought Three, and after that is stopt, that it can work no more, is not to be deemed as great as that which worketh Thirty, and is able to do as many more as it pleafeth, and which by fo many Instances hath given us Cause to believe it boundless and unlimited: And much more in a Competition must this be esteemed the proper and certain means for our judging which is the Greater. Roggo ni muns boil sivella

But there are "Difficulties in this Mat-"ter, which this our Author cannot get "over with fo much Ease as other People "do, or rather think they do." He will endeavour therefore to shew us, that we are not got over them, and bring us and himself to a Dilemma. Before I consider his Syllogism, I will take the Liberty to fay, that his Skill and Art are by no means well employed. 'Tis the best Employment of a Divine's Skill, to clear Difficulties, when others shall propose and object them: But to propose and object to the utmost, and at last say, he can only promise to do his Essay, best to clear what he can of them; is fuch a P. 19, 20 Thing, as hath an Inuendo with it, that only the Enemies of Religion can be pleafed with. But he thinks to put us hard to it either way; whether we will fay, that the Miracles which the Sorcerers did, were True

e

t

S

le

1-

0

as

ee

ris

ee

a. is.

er-

on

gi-

g,

re-

True or Falle : " If True, they were " (fays he) wrought by the Power of God, " or of the Devil." This must be granted. "If by the Power of God, then God "wrought True Miracles to confront the " Authority of Moses; whose Authority "he at the fame time established by other "True Miracles; and fo will be found " acting in opposition to his own Designs. Pallow this Argument to have fo much ferength in it, that because I cannot suppose the All-wife God acting in opposition to his own Designs, I freely take the other fide, and believe them wrought by the Power of the Devil. But whether they were True or False, I see not that I am concerned to determine as yet; nor that any thing that he has faid, will oblige me to determine any thing about it. He will fay hereafter perhaps, They must be true or false; they are certainly one or the other. No doubt of it; but what then ? If I am not concerned to know or determine which they were, (as I think no Man is); all that we can be concerned for, is, to know those of God from those of the Devil. But he goes on: "If by the Power of the Devil; "then can the Devil work True Miracles in " opposition to God; (let the word True be left out as yet, because he has not brought us to any necessity of allowing that Word to be put in;) " and then how shall " We

" we come to know which are of God and "which are of the Devil; and confequent-" ly, how shall they attest to the Truth of "any Doctrines, (he should keep close to his Point, and fay, how should they attest to the Truth of Moles, or Mofes's Doctrine) "if Rowers fo opposite can work them? (I shall keep him close to the Point in this Expression also; and with his leave put it thus; When Powers so opposite were seen to mork them. I One would think this should not be so hard a Question now after all but that a Man of ordinary Capacity might be able to answer it, and say, That which overcame in the Competition, ought doubtless to be acknowledged the Divine Power; even the Magicians themselves here acknowledged, and were forced to it by the Ropi that was put unto them: (But they need not, it feems, had they been so good at Argument as this Gentleman.) "But " on the other hand, (faith our Author) if "the Miracles wrought by the Sorcerers "were only Cheats, and meer Illusions of "the Senfes; how shall we do to distin-"guish betwirt True Miracles and Appear-"ing ones only; fince the Senses, by which "alone we can judge, may be so easily im-"posed upon, as to take Appearances for "true and real Miracles ?" I might fay, that the more Works we see of this nature, the more Opportunity there is for our coming

s. h

e

0

er v-

re

n-

ng

er-

e;

not

ley

we of

oes

sin

True

that

Chall

we

gaing

ming at some Certainty in this Case, But though we should not at all times be able to diftinguish, so as to determine certainly of fuch Miracles, whether they are Real or Delufory; the Matter is not great, fo as we can distinguish which are of God, and which not: Let the latter fort of Miracles be true, or be Illusions only; what is it to us? it is enough that we know them not to be of God. Thus in the Case of the Magicians of Ægypt therefore, feeing we know that, whether the Works which they did were Real or Delufory, a sudden Stop was put to their Power; and this forced them to acknowledge the finger of God, the Hand of a Supreme Power over-ruling that by which they acted: What fignifies our knowing more therein? Tis enough, that as whilst the Contest was depending, there might be observed some Inequality; so that Inequality appeared in the Issue beyond all Contradiction, infomuch that even the Magicians themselves gave it on the side of Mofes, that the Hand of God was with him. Therefore, as upon the whole Matter, I cannot see any Occasion of Suspense or Doubt, that can remain in any Man's mind, as to Mofes's having the better in the Contest; so neither do I see any great Difficulties, but what are in a manner already obviated, it to sil av allra W erom sil more Opportunity there is for our coe

r

15 d

es

0

to

įLi

W

id

as

m

nd

by

W

as

ere

nat

all

Ma-

of

ith

at-

nse

in's

the

Dif-

ady

Let

Let us now fee the Things, which this Author fays he will maintain; (for the removing of Difficulties, when none lye in the way.) The (First) is, That the Devil himself cannot Essay, work a True Miracle independently on P. 20. "God, or by his own Innate Power; and " this for Reasons before laid down, pag. 6. of his Book. I must to this say here (tho little concerned to meddle or make with the Position ) that the Devil might work a Miracle by his Innate Power, and yet not be said to do it independently on God; for being a Creature, in that respect he never can be independent of the Creator, neither can do any thing but by Permission, whatsoever his Natural Powers are. As this Author therefore confounds these together, independently on God, and by his own Innate Power, I must fay, that all his Reasons be- Essay. fore laid down, conclude nothing to his Pag. 6. Purpose; for though they would conclude the Devil's Power unable to work Miracles without God's Permission, and that the Power of God can at all times controul his Power; yet they conclude nothing as concerning the Natural Powers of that Evil Spirit: These may be great enough to work Miracles, notwithstanding his Reasons; but let them be ever so great, this is fure, the Power of God is above them, and can exert it self above them. God's Creation there-

therefore is not left at the Will or Mercy of this Evil Spirit, how great foever his Natu-ral Powers are; nor can this Wicked One controul God in his Will or Empire : And God may make his Use of Miracles, fo long as no Power but his can work them without Controll, whenfoever he shall think fit to put a stop to the Power of the Devil in his working of them. And further (2dly,) Whereas this Author fays, " He is " affured the Devil can impose no false Mi-" racles on our Senses, if we exercise them " as we may and fhould; because it would "be the same thing for God to permit the "Devil to work False and Cheating Mira-"cles, as to let him work True ones. This is all Talk to no purpose, if there be no. Absurdity in God's permitting the Devil to work True Miracles; and he has not as yet made it appear, that there is any Abfurdity even in this. And be they True therefore or false, 'tis certain there can be no Absurdity, fo the Power of God appear and shew it felf above that of the Devil, as it did in the Contest between Moses and the Ægyptian Magicians. And whereas (3dly,) This Author fays, " He believes that when the "Wickedest of Men work Miracles, they " never do it by a Power derived from the " Devil:" I believe otherwise, and for Two Reasons; namely, The evil End and Aim of these in working them, which may well incline

incline the World to attribute all fuch Works to the Power of the Devil; for that God cannot be supposed to countenance, much less to be the Author of them: And again, Because it is absurd to think that God should act against himself and his own Ends. And Thave reason to think also, that such wicked Persons themselves may best know whose Agents they are, and with whom they have a Communication. But whether these are apprehensive or not, the rest of the World (that hath no Concern in their dark Practices ) hath ever been inclined to attribute fuch fort of Works to the Power of the Devil: And will think it felf to have no Reason to alter its Opinion, for fear of erecting a Power equal and corrival with that of God Almighty; because it believes the Power of God superior not only to that of all fuch wicked Men, but also of whatsoever wicked Spirit may affift them. Nor doth the World forget, that God hath his Ends to serve, in permitting very wicked Men to work Miracles even by the Devil's Power, and in permitting that Evil Spirit to affift them with fuch Power; but thinketh that as God in his Infinite Wisdom knoweth how to effect, so by his Omnipotent Power he can accomplish his own Ends and Defigns, even at the fame time that the Devil and his Infiruments may endeavour to oppose them. This Third Proposition then which

of une nd

fo em ink vil

her is Mi-

emould

the ira-This

no, il to yet

dity

hew id in

ypti-This

they n the

Two Aim well

ncline

which he is upon, I may now fay falls of it felf, has not the least Reason to support it. Could he indeed have proved his first Proposition absolutely, That the Devil himfelf cannot work Miracles, this other would have followed unavoidably, That others cannot by any Power derived from bim. As far as he has proved the First, this other I grant must follow. As his Arguments therefore against the Devil's own Power of working Miracles will conclude thus far. That the Devil, whatfoever Power he has, (be it Natural or otherwise ) cannot use it when God will controul him, or any other ways than by his Permission; fo will it follow, That all who act by Power derived from him, are under the fame Permission and Controul. But as nothing he hath faid, concludeth any thing absolutely against the Devil's having a Power; fo neither can it at all follow, but that others may act by a Power derived from him. This Author therefore may well fay, "That nothing "that he has faid, does hinder him from be-" lieving that God may fometimes use both " wicked Spirits and wicked Men as his In-"ftruments, and work Miracles by them "both if he pleases." But why is it that we should at all think that God will please to use wicked Spirits as his Instruments in working Miracles, when his own Power is fufficient for it, and when there are good Angels Angels to execute his Will; or that wicked Men should be his Instruments therein, when their Miracles are wrought for wicked Ends? Let me make an Inference from the whole, which will be a great deal more to the Purpose, namely, That there is nothing he has faid, can reasonably hinder from believing that God may permit wicked Spirits to work Miracles, and to use Men as their Instruments in working them, himself having both the one and the other always under his Power and Controul. And inafmuch as the Principles upon which this Author has gone hitherto, have been shewn to have no Reason in them, though he may pretend to think himself obliged to believe that the Ægypti-Essay, an Sorcerers acted by the Power of God; I Pag. 22. shall however believe, as all the Jewish and Christian World hath with good reason hitherto believed, That they acted by the Power of the Devil; which themselves did as good as acknowledge, when they owned the Hand of God to be with Moses, and which the Scripture intimates very plainly, in telling us that they did those Operations by their Enchantments. And I think likewife that I may endure any Confequences that this Author can fasten upon me, and justly charge me with in that respect.

e

e

it

n

75

V,

m

ıd

n-

e-

at

7 a

or

ng

be-

oth

In-

em

hat

ease

s in

r is

ood

gels

I need not be concerned with those Questions which this Author puts to himself reating to his own Hypothesis, that being ground-

groundless and false. But lest he should triumph if any thing of his Book be paffed over, I shall make some Remarks upon him here also. The (First) Question then that he puts to himself is this, "If these Sorcer-" ers did not believe they could work fuch " wondrous Changes, how came they to be "called by the King to do them, and how came "they to attempt it? One would be inclined " to think, that their former Successes in this " kind, had prepared the King to expect it, " and embolden'd them to attempt this "great Work." This is indeed a very great and strong Objection against his Hypothefis; for that if these Sorcerers be supposed to have had Communication with Dæmons before, and to have been affifted by them to do strange Works before, and that some knowledge of this must be supposed to have been the Reason of their King's sending for them, as well as of their attempting to act after Moses, and therein to oppose him; then all this Author's fine Fancy must fall away to nothing; there will be no reason but to think, that the Dæmons with whom they were familiar, assisted them to the utmost of their Power, as long as till God restrained them; nor would there be any reason for the Sorcerers to think, but that what Works they had done, was by the help of their Familiars; and then their acknowledging the Finger of God with Mofes, when they -baucita

they could do no more, would not be from this, that they had done themselves beyond their Expediation; (which must rather have increased their Opinion of their Damons, than otherwise; and could not with the least reason have given them cause to think that the God whom they opposed had atlist; ed them; which is the idle Dream of this Author; ) but must have been for this reafon; That by that stop upon them, they faw the Power with Moles was greater than that with them. What has our Author now to fay, to get clear of this? He tells us, Effay, "That the Ægyptians were, of all Man p. 23, 24. " kind, the most addicted to Enchantments, "Sorceries, Predictions, and all that strange and idle Trade, of dealing with the "World of Spirits, and Powers invisible. " And Moses being Learned in all the Learning of the Agyptians, was, he believes, Pag. 25. " accounted a Magician also among them. "That therefore Pharaoh might think the "Magicians of his Court equal to Moses, and did therefore fend for them, to fee what they could do; and that the Magic cians might believe so too, and thereupon attempt to do as he did: They had probably heard, that Moses's Rod was turned into a Serpent before the Ifraelites; "which was before he practifed in the "fight of Pharaoh; and therefore, when " called by him, they came prepared with "Rods, and with their muttering Incanta-" tions

E 2

d

15

m

ne

ve

or

a

m;

fall

on

om

ut-

fod

any

that

ielp

OW-

hen

they

" tions threw them on the ground, in the " fame manner as Mofes did; and in their " other Performances exactly imitated him. I am apt to think, there is no body would have gone about to deny him any thing of this, and therefore he must hear me tell him, that I doubt it was not for any reason he could think he had to fear, that any body should deny him, that Mofes might be thought and accounted a Magician, as being bred in the Court of Agypt; that he has gone about to prove, that Mofes in probability was likely to have been fuch an one as they might account him: Perverting what St. Stephen fays, of his being learned in all the Wisdom of the Agyptians, to a Meaning which the Adversaries of Religion would wrest it to; that is to fay, that being brought up in the Learning and Sublime Sciences of the Agyptians, he must therefore be supposed acquainted and inflructed in those dark Practices which the Magicians among them dealt in, for the holding a Communication with Devils. Where this Author's Disciple also must put in and fuggest; That 'tis to be thought Moses differed very little from other Agyptian Students; and the rather, for that it is not at all plain, what Notions Moses had of God himself, till God appeared to him at Forty Years of Age. There must be a great deal of Charity, to think this Argument and unworthy Suggestion to be for no other

other Cause, but only to shew it probable, That the Magicians, who knew Meses's E2 ducation, Masters, Studies and Learning in all the Ægyptian Wisdom, might think him like one of themselves : Especially, when this Author can indeed make no Use of all this after all; for he allows; this must nel Essay, ceffarily follow from it, "That the Magici- Pag. 26. " ans might think themselves hereupon in "all Points as great Men las Mofes was, "and might hope to do all that he did. "But he does not fee there is any necessity, "that their antecedent great Performances " should have disposed the King to expect "they should work Wonders; nor have em-" boldened them to attempt the doing the "like again, when called upon to do it. A more fenfless Inference I never met with, nor ever an Argument made by a Man more directly against himself. For what must make these Magicians in this Case and Circumflances (for I agree, that the whole be as he has put it, excepting only the Scandal of Moses's being really a Magician; and if that should be allowed him, it would but make still the more against him; ) to think themselves in all Points as great as Mofes, but this; to That they believed themfelves to have as great Skill in the Art Magick, as they thought 'twas possible for any one elfe to have? And what should make them bope to do as he did, but their attrigaited to Engineering and Sociocries, and

S

g

e-

at

b-

ilt

n-

he

he

îls.

out

ght

yp-

of

at

e a

rgu-

r no

her

ting what they might have heard of his doing to his Skill in this way, and their thinking that by their Skill they might do the fame > Son that their Knowledge of what Moses did among the Hinelites, before he practifed in the fight of Pharaoh, if it be supposed, as he will have it, that they heard thereof; does but the more confirm, that they had an Opinion of their Art, and that they trusted to it in their Attempt, For otherwise, had they known that by their Art nothing of that kind could be done, they could not have hoped to do, and fo they would not have come prepared to go about doing Things like to what they had heard of Mofes. And moreover, if Pharach's thinking the Magicians of his Court were equal to Mofes, was that which disposed him to fend for them to act against him; what was it that must make him think fo, but his Knowledge that Great Things might and had been done by Magick Art; in the which he looked upon these to have as great Skill as any other? It must be this, that must make him think Mofes no other than a Magician, when he practifed before him; and that must dispose him to fend for those that he thought as great Men as him, which he could not have dreamt his Magicians to be, but from Some Experience of their Art. And again, if it were so that the Ægyptians were addicted to Enchantments, and Sorceries, and PrePredictions, and the Trade of dealing with Spirits and Powers invisible; 'tis to be supposed that these Magicians, if any, were Men of Skill in that way; Thefe therefore, of all others, could not be thought to have hope to do after Moses, if having Knowledge of the Art, they knew no luch Works of Wonder could be done by it: Thefe, therefore, were the most unlikely to have attempted it, but upon former Experiments that great Things might be done that way. And as for their Imitation of Moses, that can no way argue, that they only hoped to do like him, or all that he did; for imitate him they must in the Things he did, to shew Pharaoh that their Power was as great as his; but we find they had a peculiar Way of their own to which they trusted for the Performance; that is to fay, their Inchantments. This Author therefore, I think, has sufficiently accounted for the Boldness of their Attempt, but the Issue turns not to the account of his own Hypothefis, but directly against it; as it shews that these Magicians trusted to their own Art, to the Correspondence they had with familiar Spirits, and to what they had experienc'd of the Help and Power of thefe, and to their Imagination (though therein they found themselves at last mistaken ) that Moses acted by the same Pow-

pose it as not

e

1,

id

it.

y

be

bin

èd

ey

his

ich

finit

iim

reat

Ma-

pon

er?

ink

n he

from gain,

and

Pre-

Power: and that Pharaoh upon what he had heard of this Art, and of Performances that might be done thereby, suspected Moles to be a Dealer therein; and therefore fent for others, fuch as were esteemed to have the greatest Skill in this Way, to oppose him. Which all concludes for this, that the Magicians in their Work were affifted by those Damons with whom they were familiar before, that these assisted them to their utmost Power, till God restrained and disabled them: The sense of which Restraint forced their Wicked Agents to acknowledge the Finger of God in what they could not follow. 'Tis therefore well faid of our Author (and a good coming off for him it would be, if he could thereby amuse us, to think that he had spoken to his own Purpose, when not a Syllable that he has faid upon this Point, as yet, tends to it, but to the contrary; as does that which he is going about to fay, put upon its true Supposition) namely, "Tis "no great matter for Men, of a forbidden "Curiofity, ignorant of the Ways of God, " and brought up in a dreadful Superstition " and Persuasion of the Power of Spirits " and Dæmons invisible, to believe they can "do great Things by their Invocation and "Abominable Rites used towards them." But what is the true Reason of this their believing they may do great Things by fuch Practices? It could not be that they should be

be easily persuaded to think this, if in experience it were found that they could do nothing; it must doubtless be for this, that those Evil Spirits are ready to affift them to their utmost, and that they find them ready in their Use of such Abominable Rites, and have experience of their help in the practice of their Art. " But now, fays this Author, Effay, "how it comes to pass that God permits Pag. 17. "them by fuch wonderful Events to conti-" nue in their Delufion, is a Thing not easie " to folve, but yet he will attempt in Answer " to his Second Question; which is, Why "God should work Three great Miracles by "the Hands of Jannes and Jambres, to con-"front the Authority of Moses, which he "established by Miracles, acting, as it were, "in opposition to himself, and his own De-" fign. Truly we are very cunningly drawn in here to a Supposition that the Delusion such Wretches are under, is this, Their thinking great Things may be done by the help of Spirits and Dæmons invisible, and that what they do in that Dark Way, is by their help. We own them to be under the frongest Delusion, in their forsaking God to go after these, in their Imagination that these help them out of kindness, or can give them any absolute help in time of need, which 'tis to be thought these Malicious Spirits would not, and which they cannot if they would, whenever God shall think fit

it

21

e,

at

ot

it,

as

ut is

en

od,

on its

can ind

1. "

beuch

uld be

dies.

to

to over-rule them. But nevertheless, surely their dealing with these Spirits is not all a Delufion, they are Devils, and not God, that have to do with them in these Impious and Abominable Rites; these are found by them in their Secret Practices, and Wicked Art, and thefe give them Affistances somewhat to their Expectation, or they would not continue in such their Ways. It lies upon this Author therefore first to prove this his Wild Notion, that it was indeed God that wrought those Three Miracles by the Magicians of Agypt, before he take the Trouble upon him to account for his fo doing. Let him first shew why so absurd a Thing should be thought, as that God should act in oppofition to himself, and to his own Design; why this should not be an Argument to overthrow his false and utterly groundless Hypothefis. Had he done this, he had prepared his Way to account for a Difficulty which the World would have been then concerned with: Whereas now, all his Talk upon that Matter is nothing at all to the purpole; at least it can fignifie nothing to his Purpose, whatever use it may be of to others, who may apply it differently, as he will find I shall the most of it. Now his Answer is chis; "I must (fays he) in the first place "premise, that if no sufficient Reason could " be alledged why God should permit these Wicked Sorcerers to work Three great (22 Mira cles,

1

C

h

ti

M

-A

fe

al

H

-bx

it

th

ta

371

"Miracles, it would not prejudice the Cause "in hand; it would not follow from our "Weakness, that he did not actually permit "them of the Matter of Fact is certain." Right, the Fact is certain; and that it could not be without God's Permission, is as certain; but 'tis no less certain, that God's Permission, and God's Actual Affistance are two different Things: And if this Author cannot give us a Reason why God should act against himfelf, in opposition to himself and his own Defign, it must follow, that these wrought their Works by the Power of Satan, and his Affistance, though by the permission of God. Therefore I must now apply his Words to my Purpose, and say God's permission is plain; for the Fact was certainly done, which it could not have been, without he had permitted it, who doubtlefs had Power to have hinder'd it : So that if through Weakness I could not alledge a fufficient Reason for that his Permiffion, nevertheless I should not but think that he permitted it, and that his Ends were wife, and good, and just thereimo But fill I must hold our Author to it, that in reference to the Thing which he has in hand, that is, to his proving it to be God's own Work, if he fail of a Reafon why God frould be the Agent in it, and act against himself. it must follow, that I these Magicians be thought to have acted by the Power of Satan, and by his Affiftance, there appearing Manoda 101

15

d

is

ld

(e

at

in the Fact, and in the Circumstances there of, nothing to the contrary, but rather all Things that can be, to conclude this for certain to be the Power they trusted to, and that was on all hands taken to be their Affistance. And our Author's prefuming to take the contrary for granted, (by reason of his believing, "That if God had given the "Devil that Power at large, no Miracles "could be of use to testifie the Mission of "his Prophets)," must appear to be no other than a groundless Presumption of his own Wild Fancy: For that this very Instance shews, God did not give the Devil a Power at large, but the contrary; that is to fay, that it was no farther than God's permission, it was under his Restraint and Controul, and it was stopt so soon as God was pleased to restrain it. And whereas this Author fays (Secondly) "We may conjecture " that God might permit thefe Sorcerers to "work Three Miracles, the better to con-"vince them that there was a Power fupe-"tior to all others, to that of Nature, and "whatever Spirits or Damons they had be-" fore trusted to, or thought themselves as-"fifted by." (Litake hold of these his Words, and apply them to my Purpose, adding) when they should find a stop given after this to all their Skill, Art and Power, and to the Power of these Spirits to which they trusted, and by which they thought

h

fa

hi

W

be

en

att

ne

Ex

tha

by

COL

furi

cou

the

tru

hei

t he

our

nim

thought they might be affifted, and whose help they had formerly found, and had now met with in their way of Enchantments but which they now faw fo much under a Constraint, that it could no longer help them. And having thus taken hold of his Words for my purpose, I shall now utterly debar him from making any use of them to his own: For whereas he fays farther, "We may well believe they never had "wrought fuch Miracles before, if any at " all; and this Power they might find to be "the same that affisted Moses, &c." I must fay to him, that all this is gratis Dictum on his side, all the Reason is on ours: We may well believe they knew great Things might be done by their Art, and had had experience thereof, or else they never would have attempted it now; these of all Men would never have attempted it, who had Skill and Experience in the Art, if they had not known that Things of this nature might be done by it, or had found before, that nothing could be done by it. We may well likewise further think and believe that they never could find this Power that helped them, to be the same that assisted Moses; for that as they trufted to find it, fo they met with it in heir own Way of Inchantments, they found thelped them greatly to oppose him, they ound it controuled by the Power affilting um: And if they had found that which Was

e

0

id

e-

ıf-

is

d-

gi-

nd

to

ey

ght

was with them to be the fame with his. they had found that which was for their own turn, and for Pharaul's, whom they endeavoured to ferve in their Work; but perceiving by all these Reasons evident in the Fact and whole Transaction, that Mofes was affilted by a Superior Power, which they found to be superior, they hereupon conclude, that this Power was able to deliver the Hebrews out of Pharaob's Hand, notwithstanding what he, or they for him could do, and tell him it was the Finger of God. Whereupon, though this Author is pleafed to fay, That "he does not find there is any thing "hard or absurd, in supposing these Magi-"cians convinced by the Miracles they wrought "themselves, of a Divine Power superior to "any they had tried or known before; and "that this Power was the fame by whose " affiftance Moses wrought his Miracles: He must give me leave to fay that I find it most ridiculous and absurd, and hard to suppose any such thing. It is very ridiculous and monstruoutly absurd to suppose, they should think the Power with them to be the same with that of Moses, when as it helped them so greatly to oppose him; it's unlikely altogether they should think ever the better of the Power with Mofes for their own doing Works beyond their expectation; they might hence think much the better of the Power which they apply'd

ply'd to for Affistance, but they could very hardly think the Power which they oppofed, would help and affift them, when it rather should in reason be thought it would put them to confusion, for their infolent attempt against it, as well as for the promoting its own end and defign. And if by the Miracles they wrought themselves they had had any conviction, on the account of their being above their own expectation, why were they not convinced at the First, which was as great and difficult a work to Reason, and consequently as much above their expectation in Reason as any of the following? (This is our Author's own Argument, and if he confiders, he will find it to hold strongly against himfelf, though very weak in his use of it, as will appear by and by. ) Why had they neither Conviction in the Second at least, nor ever yet in the Third; that is to fay, why had they not Conviction in any nor in all the Works which they wrought? but at last came to have Conviction in an Attempt wherein they failed. Surely the Miracles which they wrought themselves, and that which they could not work, are different things; and if they were not convinced by the one, but were convinced when they came to the other, then it was not by what they did themselves, but by what they could not do, that they came to be convinced of a Di-

11

0

de

le

it

to di-

se,

to

as

m; ink

ofes

heir

uch

ap-

a Divine Power Superiour to what they had known before: and this could not make them to think that the Power that had affifted them was the same by whose affiftance Mofes wrought his Miracles; but quite the contrary, that it was not the same, for that his was plainly Superiour to it. And hereupon when they came to turn the Dust into Lice as Moses had done, and found they were not able to do it, they cry'd out that this was the Finger of God. I need not fay, what he would draw me in to fay, viz. "That these Magicians did not 'till " now fee or believe the Hand of God was "with Moses, but that what he did " came to pass by Art Magick, or they "knew not how." I think them wicked enough to have endeavour'd to withstand Moses, as well as the Spirits with which they were in Confederacy malicious enough to have helped them to oppose him to the uttermost, though both had known God's Power to have been with him; and that therefore 'twas Constraint only that made them acknowledge the Finger of God, when they could now do no more; and not any good Will in them to own it upon the first cause or ground they saw of Conviction. And therefore I must fay, that whether they had not, or might not have had fome Conviction before concerning the Power with Moses, is a thing needless to be either deter-

In

th

M

di

determined or examin'd. Here however, and this is enough, they were forced to acknowledge the Hand of God; and this from the stop put unto their Power, that when with their Inchantments they tried to bring forth Lice; they could not do it.

But against this, our Author brings a Essay, mighty Objection, Saying, "A little Rea- Pag. 19. " fon and Observation might suffice to " shew that the Hand of God was full as " great in turning Rods into Serpents, "Water into Blood, and bringing up Frogs "upon the Land, as in turning Duft into "Lice, whose Matter may feem much " more prepared for fuch a Change, than "that of the other Bodies for the Changes "which they underwent. Can any one " imagine there is more appearing Difficul-"ty in turning Dust into Lice, than a "little Wand into a Serpent ? Or can one " find, that the first should shew the Finger " of God visible, and the latter require "no fuch great Power to effect it?" Notably Argued; but that there is a mistake in a Supposition or two that he goes upon ; which when rectified, it will appear that his whole Argument is nothing at all to the purpose. Where does he find, that the Magicians accounted it a Work of greater difficulty, to turn Dust into Lice than to do the other? This no where appears, but ras

e

r

r

ther the contrary, in their attempting to do this as they did the former. But after they had attempted to do this with their Inchantments, but could not, then the Magicians fay, This is the Finger of God. But how if they should not fay it in respect of any Difficulty that they apprehended in but in respect of a Stop which they found put unto the Power affifting, which they thought might have done this Work as well as the other, but was fo restrained as it could not. It is plain to any Man's Reason, that these Magicians must say what they did in acknowledgment of God's Power, upon one or other, or both of these accounts. Whether upon both or upon one of these accounts alone, or upon which of the two absolutely, I will not pretend to say. But if our Author thinks he has cut us off from thinking that they spake in reference to the one, let him confider that he has not faid any thing to cut us off from thinking that it was in reference to the other. So that conceiving these Magicians to have Common Sense and Reason, if we suppose it could not be the Difficulty of this Work above the other, that must make them to fay, The Finger of God was therein; we must and will believe it was from the stop they found put unto their Power ! And if this were the Cafe; it would appear so much the more evidently in this, that the Magicians were restrained from doing that which to Reason might feem less difficult than what they had done before: This might more convince them that the Power by which they had been affifted was limited and reftrained, whereas Moses appeared to act by a Superior Power able to controul theirs, but it felf not controulable; which therefore could not be deny'd to be the Power of the Great God. I will therefore go on (in this Author's Words) to fay, That now was the Time they went to Pharaoh to tell him, That the God who wrought these Miracles (not with themselves, for it does not appear that they said to Pharaoh any thing of that nature, but) with Moses, was certainly the most powerful of all Beings; and therefore that his Servant Moses must be hearkened to, and the Hebrews suffered to depart. After they were fufficiently convinced themselves, that the Power by which these Miracles were wrought, was able to do what he pleased; (that is to fay, the Power with Mofer; for as to that with themselves, they had found it unable, and Pharaoh had feen it so to be, and it had been a vain Thing to tell him otherwise) they endeavoured to persuade the King, who yet hearkened not unto them. But we have Argument upon Argument from our Author, still more to puzzle us; "They found indeed (Rays he) that they

0

10

id

at

at

on

ild

he

The

vill

un-

afet

itly

in

" could work no more Miracles; were they " thereby convinced that thefe they had al-"ready wrought, were not wrought by God? They might, I will adventure to fay, if they knew it not before, in that they faw the Power that had affifted them, disabled; and yet, it may be, they knew before, what their own Help was; yet whether they did or no, is nothing, I am fure, to this Author's Purpose, nor mine, as to the Point in hand. But he has a great Inference to make from it, namely, "Then must they also think (fays he) "that Moses's Miracles were no better than their own, and consequently " were not wrought by God." Let us put this into a Syllogism; If the Magicians by their not being able to work any more Miracles, were thereby convinced that those they had already wrought, were not wrought by God; then must they think that those of Moses were no better than their own. I do not fee the least appearance of a Reason in the Supposition, to infer the Consequence from, yet I do think he aims at fomething that is not exprest in his Words, and I take it to be this; — Then might the Magicians think, as to the Works themselves, theirs and his, they were all alike. And if this be his Meaning, I will own the Inference thus far to be good; but then I must still utterly deny his farther Consequence; that is to say, That hence they might conclude his to be no more wrought

wrought by God than theirs was; for their not being able to go on, and his still going on, must have shewn them a Difference between the Powers that wrought them; that theirs were wrought by the Power that was stopped, his by the Power that went on ; And therefore they could not possibly make the fame Conclusion as to the Power working, wherein there appeared a manifest difference, as they might in reference to the Works themselves; wherein, as to those that had been done by both, a Difference might not fo perfectly appear. But this Author goes on further, faying, " If they had feen any " great difference betwixt the Miracles of "Moses, and their own, they would have " feen at first that the Finger of God was in "it." And how does this Author know, but that they might see it at the first? Has this Author so great an Opinion of their Honefly, as to think that then they would have owned it? I must freely own, that I think they would conceal it as long as they could conceal it, as they did; like their Master, whose Agents they were, oppose till they could oppose no longer. However, should we grant this Author that these Wicked Men had something of Honesty, and might see no difference at the first, since they do not tell us of any they observed; we must not be drawn in to allow, "that they might "well hereupon conclude they were both Effay, " wrought P. 31.

-

n

0

0

k

in

n

ks

ıll

ill

ut

ce

ht

"wrought by the same Power, and came to acquaint the King with it." For as to that which he calls their coming to acquaint the King, (which is a very improper Expreffion concerning Actions which were done in presence, and in the fight of the King; and I doubt is used only to amuse the Reader with fomething strange and uncouth); this was not done in the Time that he can pretend there was no Difference feen, but after the Difference appeared so plain, that it was no longer to be concealed: And had they took upon them to conclude that Moses wrought by the same Power as they, whilst their Works were the same, and no difference had appeared, the Thing had been to Pharaoh's Mind, it was what he would have had, and 'twould have answered the Expectation he had in them; and must have baffled the Design of Moses, had the Transaction here ended: But the Proceeding going on, and these being stopped in their Work, it is not to be pretended, that at their fpeaking as they did to the King, they faw no difference, and might thereupon conclude that bis Works were wrought by the same Power as theirs; for there was a difference that was now feen by all the Spectators, as well as found by them; and therefore this could not be, neither was it so much as pretended that their Power and his were the same; but what they say is of his only, only, This is the Finger of God. Ay, but (fays our Author) "When they fay -This Effay, " is the Finger of God, I would not under-" stand them to mean, this turning Dust in-" to Lice, is the Finger of God, in contra-" diction to the other foregoing Miracles, as "if they shew'd no such Finger or Power of "God." Nor I neither truly; for that it must be concluded, that one and the same Power affifted Moses all along; as the Magieians there fore were now forced to own, that the Power with Moses was that of God: I that think 'em to have little Honesty, cannot but imagine em to have more Sense however, than to go about to speak that they did of this Action, as to the Finger of God appearing in it, in contradiction to the other foregoing Works of Moses: Or, if they had gone about to fay to foolish a Thing, it must

I will here again take this Author's Words, Essy, and say; "I imagine then that God permit"ted these Enchanters to work some Mira"cles, in order to convince them of his Al"mighty Power; and cannot tell how the
"Evidence could be resisted, which this
"Transaction gave of the Omnipotent
"Power of God: And I think their Disap"pointment in attempting the Fourth

F 4 Miracle,

e

S

is

7,

have been confuted by the Reason of all Mankind, who would naturally believe that the same Power was with Moses in one as in "Miracle was that which convinced them." Of what? that the foregoing ones that they wrought could not be wrought by Art Magick? (as this Author thinks). No fuch matter, for as to what themselves had done, they knew by what Power they attempted it, and had no Reason but to think they did it by the fame: But of this then it must be, That seeing they could not follow Moses in his Doings, his Power was not as their Power, but was different from, and fuperior to it. But this Author has more Stuff still; "If it might be supposed of "their own foregoing Works, that they " might have been done by Art Magick, "they might have still gone on." They did attempt to go on, fays the Scripture, with their Inchantments, but could not. But he will fay again, "There was nothing " to deter them more from undertaking this, " of turning Dust into Lice, than from any of "the former." 'Tis supposed so; for the Magicians were not deterred from undertaking it, they did try their Enchantments in this, as in former Cases, but yet could not do it. But our Author will still offer at something, tho' he knows not what, nor considers the Consequence. - "But the being stopped " (he fays) might only convince them, that " the Power which had hitherto affifted "them, would no longer do it." Very fine; might it not also convince them, that

that it could no longer do it? The Scripture fays, the Magicians attempted by their Enchantments, and could not do it. Will he dare to fuggest, that this came to pass only because the Power affilting them thought it felf to have done enough, and would do no more: Then the Conclusion might have been the quite contrary to what it was: The Magicians might have denied with pretence enough, what they were forced to confess. And that they were forced to the Confession they did make, I take to be plain enough to the World, from this; that they stood before Moses afterwards in his other Works, with no good defign it must be thought, when the Plague of the Boils seized them, as well as the rest of the Ægyptians, Exod. 9. 11. As also from their Attempt to do that, which they failed in. This doth necessarily shew, that there was no Will wanting in them to have continued the Opposition. And there is besides all this, another Thing that may give us cause to think that there was no want of Will in the Power affifting them; which is, its affifting them at first in the Work. This even the Magicians themselves must think to be done in their favour, and to give countenance" to them and their Art; and if fo, why might they not with reason think, it would have been continued? And as it failed them, they must think it was, because

e,

t.

ig

IS,

of he

ta-

in

ot

ne-

ers

sed

hat ted

ery

em,

cause it could no longer help them. And even according to their Principles as Magicians, they must think this; that Art pretending to a Power over, as well as to a Communication with the Spirits: (Not that in Reafon, indeed, any Man can-well think that there should be anything in the Art to make these subject to it; but yet by the Devil's Subtilty, and feigning himself subject to their detestable Rites and Incantations, 'tis sufficiently known that the Men of Skill in that Wicked Art pretend, and are soon deluded to think, they have a Power over their Familiars by their Incantations; which is the cause of their constant use of them, when they have an occasion or desire for their Aid.) Here therefore, as their Inchantments were used, and they found not help to their Defire; they could not attribute it to any Defect in their Art, for they found it to prevail already in the beginning of this Transaction; nor to want of Will in the Powers they dealt with, for these they found to be prefent with them; it must therefore in all Reafon be imputed to fome want of Power in their Affistance; and if they could not give account to themselves why these should want Power from any Difficulty that they could fee in the Work, they must ascribe it to some stop which must be thought to be given by the Power which they were then opposing. I forbear to urge upon our Author

ther here the Consequences of his Rash Suggestion; I content my self to have shewn sufficient Reason that there could be nothing of Truth in it: and shall only add, That whereas the Power had affifted them, if it would not have gone on, if it had not had a Will to go on, 'tis to be thought it would have fuggested as much to its Agents, that these might not have been baffled in their Attempt; and as it did not this, 'tis to be thought these Powers not proceeding with them, was not that it would not, but that it could not. And whether it indeed would not, or whether it could not, all Men that should ever hear of the Competition, and have either Common Understanding, or Common Honesty, will say, and will have Reason to say, if the Magicians had not owned their Defect, and much more as they have themselves owned it, let the Power that prevailed be acknowledged to be the Finger of God.

e

e-

e-

iil

1;

ey

e-

ea-

in

ve

uld

aey

e it

be

hen

Au-

thor

Here is the Place for me to take notice and observe to this our Author, that as his Hypothesis hath appeared to be a Supposition for which there is no manner of ground, so that which he offers as Reason to account for it, is in it self an Absurdity: For how can it in Reason be thought that God should himself work, or help the Magicians to work. Three Miracles, to convince them that there was a Power superior to that of Nature, or what-

ever

ever Spirits or Dæmons they had before trusted to? How is it possible, that this should be a Means of convincing them? Could their being enabled to do great Things in the way of their Art, convince them that their Art could do nothing? Could their finding themselves to have so great help, when they fought for it of the Spirits which they trusted to, and had communication with, be a Conviction to them that these had no Power? Or could it con-vince them of a Power Superior to these, whilst they found themselves assisted to do all that the other did? If he will fay, there was a Superior Power found, when they were no farther affifted; 'tis granted; but then it was by the Stop upon themselves, and by their seeing no such Stop upon Moses: which is not our Author's Hypothesis; in which respect the Absurdity still remains. For Reason must think, that if there were no Power in Nature for any Works of this kind, the Works of Moses of themselves must have been the best Conviction, that a Power Superior to Nature was then acting: Much better, than if these, who endeavour'd by their Art and Skill to do like him, should find themselves to do it they knew not how. And if wick-ed Spirits had no Power really for Things of this kind, the best Confutation (so far as Reason can judge) had been, for their Agents

e

0

1-

m

n-

le,

to

ill

d,

tis

top

ich

r's

di-

nk,

for

Mo-

best

Na-

han

and

lves

icks of

r as

r Agents gents to have found no Affistance. And yet as the Case was otherwise in fact, as the Magicians had dealt with Spirits and Powers invitible, and had before experienced ('tisprobable) their Help in many Cases, and found Success in their Art for obtaining this their Help; thus the most effectual Way of shewing, that the Power of Moses was not as their Power, and that there was a Power Superior to all those Spirits, with which the Magicians held a Correspondence, seems to be that Course which was taken; namely, That the Magicians should find their Art to prevail as usually, to make those Dæmons they dealt with, present to them as at other times; that those Spirits should be also permitted to shew and exert their Power in Asfistance of their Agents, but that their Agents and they should be suddenly stopped together; by which, even those that dealt with them, should be forced to confess the Power of God with Moses, which had shewn it felf thus Superior.

But it feems it must be remembred, that our Author calls all this but a Conjecture. Essay, If by all this, he means his fingular Noti- p.33. on, and all that he has faid upon it, concerning the Enchanters doing their Works by the Power of God, as well as Mofes his: I would be glad, for our Author's fake, it were offered as no other; because it is so exceeding weak, that I am ashamed for him,

him, that it has been ever offered to the World; much more, that he should for the fake of so absurd a Notion, let himself as he has done to contradict the far better Opinions of others before him; even to the hazard of Revealed Religion, as he has attempted to render questionable the chief received Evidences thereof. But if he means this only to be Conjecture and Guess, which he had offered for the Reason of God's suffering these Enchanters to work Three Miracles; namely, That they might be convinced of his Almighty Power and Superiority over all the Laws of Nature, and over whatever Spirits or Dæmons thefe Enchanters had trusted to before: I think the Conjecture as to the main fo well grounded, that he need not have made an Apology for his gueffing fo well, had he used it to account for a better Hypothesis. shall allow him however to abide under the Shelter which he has made for himfelf, by his calling all this but a Conjecture; for he has need enough of it; and all the harm I wish him, is, that he may go off well.

As for his other Conjecture, That God might permit these Sorcerers to work Three Miracles, to harden Pharaoh's Heart, and make him still more obstinate in his Resistance and Refusal to let the People go: I think it to be well grounded, if designed only to account for God's Permission; but

Can-

cannot think it would account for God's being bimfelf actually an Agent in affifting the Maricians. However, I thank this Author for fo explaining himfelf upon it, as to let us know that his meaning is, that thefe Miracles were the Opportunities of shewing Pag. 38. Pharaob's Heart intolerably hardened, who would not be moved by them. Which, if understood in reference to the whole Tranfaction, is a Thing that I readily agree in. That is to fay, God did not permit the Sor! cerers to work Miracles, that their fo doing might barden Pharach's Heart, but he permitted them to do thefe Things in Oppos fition to Mofes, that by the Sudden Difabling of their Power, the Power of God with Mofes, and the Superiority thereof might more evidently appear; which, as it carried the greater Conviction with it, the more inexculable must Pharaoh thence be. in his hardening himself against it. This I take to be the Thing that the Scripture intimates in the notice it has taken, that even when the Maritians told him, This was the finger of God; nevertheless Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, Exod. 8. 19. The Descant of our Author upon this Text, is altogether trifling. "When, he fays, Pharaoh was neither mo- Effay, "ved at the Miracles which these Magici- Pag 194 "ans wrought, nor at the Confession they "made, that they (i.e. their own Mira-" cles

h

d

1-

ik n-

0-

ed

he

by

he

rm

od

ree

ind

esi-

: 1

ned

but

can-

" cles as well as Mofes's') were wrought by " the finger of God, and the Stop they " found to their working any more." For I cannot see truly, how he should be moved at all by their Miracles in opposition to Mofes; which would rather cause him to suspend, than make him give credit to Mo-Jes: And had they pretended to tell Pharaob, that their own Works as well as Mofes's were by the Power of God; it must have made the whole a Ridiculous Scene to him; for that he might have objected, their known Inchantments and Art Magick, and their Stop must have been in that case the greatest Reason for him not to have believed them, if they had gone about to pretend, that their Works and Mofes's were wrought by one and the fame Power. But as the Powers were opposite, and engaged one against the other, Pharaob knowing by what Art and Power his Magicians acted, and finding them put to the worst; wherein the Power of Moses appearing to be the finger of God, even his Opposers being Judges: These Things must indeed shew Pharach's Hardness and Obstinacy to be ve-

But now we are brought back to this Author's First and great Objection, which appears now in its full Force; namely; "Pha-"raob could not be so much condemned for not being convinced by the Miracles he

Fag. 40

" law wrought, by reason he saw them "wrought in Opposition to each other. "Why is Moses to be believed more for his "Miracles, than the Magicians for theirs? To this our Author is pleased to give a slight Answer, leaving room for himself to make a Reply with something of Amusement. The Answer he gives, is, "Because the Pag. 412 " Magicians came themselves to the King, " and confessed that Moses did his Miracles "by the finger of God." Had another Man been to give the Answer, he would have put in And for that these Magicians were forced to this Confession, by being foiled in their utmost Attempts; and for that Pharaoh himself had feen the Competition, and the Issue thereof: So that there was more than the Magicians Saying in the Case; his own Eyes had feen these do their utmost to withstand and oppose the Power that vanquished them. But observe the Reply which this Author, in the Person of his Sebolar, makes upon himself.—"Did Essay, they at the same time confess, that they themselves had but cozened and imposed upon Pharaoh and his Court, and had indeed wrought no Miracles all the while he thought they had? This Ingenuity might have had forme good Effect upon him." Truly this Author's Ingenuity is ery little, in his going about to inveigle s to believe his absurd Notion, of the Magicians

A

0

,

3

fe

e-

to

re

ut

ed

by

ed,

re-

the

ing

new

Ve-

Au-

ap-

Pha-

d for

9 he

Caw

hence, That they did not tell Pharaoh that they had cozened him! 'Tis possible, all might be a Delusion of the Devil's, and the Magicians themselves know no more of it than Pharaoh. On the other hand, if the Miracles be thought true, they could not say they had cozened him; they said all needful to be said, when they told him, that the Hand of God was with Moses; it was easy enough for him to think the rest. That is, That if their Works might seem equal to Moses's, they were done by another Hand that was inserior to that with Moses, and that could not help him to withstand the Power of God.

This Author goes yet farther on with his Objection. "If there were true Miracles" on both fides, he must then believe nei-

"ther. To which the best Answer he can think on, he says, is this; viz. "That the Magici-

" ans did as good as confess, that the Mira-" cles they had themselves wrought, were

"wrought by the Power of the same God, and to the same Intent that Moses's were

For which he gives this Reason: "That

"though the Magicians came with wicked "Dispositions to set themselves against Mo-

" ses, and used the utmost of their wicked

"Art for that purpose, to do thereby Works "equal to those of Moses, and might at first

" think they did them by the Allifance of

" Da

Effay, Pag. 42. Damons; yet afterwards they might come to fee and know that it was not " fo: but that they had acted by the fame " Power that Moses did." It is as easily faid, they might not know any thing of this nature; and with a great deal of Reafon on this side may it be said, that they did not apprehend any fuch Thing in the leaft; for they never applied themselves to the God of Moses, nor attempted any thing in his Name; but all they did was in opposition to him: How then, or for what reason should they think he wrought with them?

f

d

d

n,

it

1:

m

10-

ith

th-

his

cles

nei-

hink

gici-

Aira:

were

God,

were

That

icked

A Mo-

vicked

Works

at first

nce o

" Da

This Author further observes, "The King Effay, "would now hearken no more to them "than to Moses." And why should he? favs his Scholar: Methinks they deserved Equal Credit. " So they did, fays the Infructor: He should have believed them both attesting the same Truth by Miracles "much alike; namely, That Moses was "fent of God, and wrought Miracles to "attest his Mission, and was to be heark-"ened to." And now the Scholar must applaud the New Turn given to this Affair, which has made the Magicians Miracles to attest the Truth of Moses's Mission, and the king more faulty for not believing what his own Enchanters faid to him. A Notable Turn it is; come but another Man of Skill after him, and he may bid fair to the Turn-

ing

ing of Religion out of the World. These things, it feems, must be taken for granted; namely, The Magicians and Moses deferved Equal Credit; their Miracles were alike; they were wrought by one and the fame Power. Pharaoh knew both one and the other to be True Miracles: But now he faw them wrought in Opposition one to the other; which then must be believe? Neither, it seems; had not the Magicians come over to Moses's side, and said, they had found 'twas Moses's God that helped them to work their Miracles also; and as they did this in effect, he must believe both. But, is not Pharaoh, and any one else for him, at liberty to ask the Magicians a Reason, Why he is to believe this their Story; and how themselves came to find this that they tell him? feeing that they never applied themselves to the God of Moses, nor attempted any thing in his Name; and what they did, was by him feen to be done by their Application to a contrary Power; and they did not tell him any thing of this, whilst they were assisted by the Power they now pretend to be helped by : They themfelves tried to do more, as thinking themselves to have another's help; they likewise did what they did in opposing this Power, which they now would pretend favourd them. And can they think so absurdly, or if they do, what reason can they shew him to

efe

nt-

le-

ere

the

ind

he

the

lei-

me

had

to to

did

But,

nim,

fon,

and

they

olied

r at-

what

e by

wer;

this,

they

hem-

hem-

ewise

ower,

our'd

y, or

im to

be-

believe a Thing so absurd, as that the Power which they went about to oppose, should assist them against it self? All these things must render that which they now say, incredible. When this Author shall satisfy the World as to these Objections, and essectually prevent others of the like kind, that may be made; (and would, he must think, be made on the behalf of Atheism and Insidelity; when it should be once perceived, that his Notions had found footing, and were believed in the World:) then I shall think him free of that blame, which I must now lay him under, for his unaccountable Rashness.

Surely 'tis a very strange unaccountable thing, when Religion is at stake, for a Man to talk fo weakly in its Defence, as to lay himself and that open, to be wounded by every Adversary; and all this in fondness to a vain infignificant Notion, that lyes at the bottom of his Heart forfooth: A Notion for which there is no ground, and in which there is no fense; and which is so far from being a help to him to answer the grand Objection that he is scared at, that it infinitely more perplexes the Cause he would defend. How easily in the old way is that mighty Objection answered! Both wrought Miracles; (let any one that will, suppose them True.) These Miracles were wrought in Competition: By the Competition it

G 3

was

was intended to find out, in which the Great God had an hand. The one Side was vanquished in the Trial, and could do no more; and being thus vanquished, acknowledgeth the Superior Power. The Question is, Whether the Stander-by is to believe neither of these, for that their Works that he faw at the first feem to be equal and alike: or, Whether he has reason to believe him that he faw to be Superior in the end, and which was fo, even its Adversaries and Oppofers being Judges? I believe, no man of common Sense would pretend to fay, Neither is to be believed: for that to his Apprehension their first Actions seemed much alike: This might be a Reason to keep a Man in suspense a while indeed, till a Difference and Inequality should some way or other appear; but this Inequality appearing to his lown Senses in the iffue of the Transaction, and being yielded to by that which withstood as long as it could make Opposition; a Rational Man, I am perswaded, must presently acknowledge and give credit to that which he faw to be the Superior, and which he heard even its Adversaries own to be the Power of God.

But there are a few Questions which now our Author has to put to the World, which has hitherto been all along of Opinion, that the Ægyptian Magicians wrought their Miracles by the Power of the Devil; where-

by

he

as

10

Wti-

ve

at

ave

id,

nd

an ıy,

his ied

ep lia

ay

ap-

of

by

uld

am

ind

the

Ad-

OW

ich

on, neir

ere-

by

by he is in hopes to undeceive it, or leave it in perplexity. And the Questions to be Essay. asked of the World are thefe: "(1.) Whe- p. 46, 47 to ther it does not think that the finger of 5 God was as much feen, in Moses's turn-"ing the Rod into a Serpenty the Waters in-"to Blood mand bringing Frogs upon the Land was in turning the Duft into Lice? A threwd Question othis and but that I sdo nor think any Man in the World is concemed to answer it. And if a Man should answer to this Author's Mind, that turning the Dustained Lice was in his Opinion the molt cafy of all the Four, there would be ho Advantage to this Author's Hypothelis from it : VAs long as the fame Man might fay that though to his thinking, the finger of God would least have appeared in that of all the Four, if they were to be confidered fingle, and compared one with the other; yet confidering the Magicians Power was here flopped, this made it to much the more visible to him, that the Hand of God was with Mofes in the whole Action; and that the Power affifting the Magicians was under its Restraint and Controul; seeing it could not proceed to do a Thing to appearance more easy than what it had done, for foon as the opposite Power restrained it. The (2d.) Question to be asked of the World, is, Whether the Enchanters did not think that they themselves had turned their Rods more " into G 4

" into Serpents, &c. as certainly as Mofes "had done? And confequently, Whether "they did not fee the Finger of God as "much in their own Works, as in those of Mofes?" Truly 'tis hard to fay what the Enchanters thought, neither do Joknow how the World should come at any certainty about their Thoughts; guels, however, we may; and for once, to oblige our Author, I will guess according as I know he would have me, That the Enchanters might think that they had turned the Rods inco Serpents, &c. as certainly as Moses had done (though all the while the Magicians might be millaken and deceived, as perhaps their Real Thoughts were not what I have gueffed them I What will I fay then to the Que fronthat's asked, with the "Whether they "did not confequently feethe Finger of God "as much in their own Works as in thefe of Mofes 2" L antwer here, That I have several Reasons to make me think, not with standing, that they could see nothing of the Finger of God in their own, what foever they might fee in Mofer's Works ; namely, that they had Reason to apprehend what Power affifted themselves Thecause they knew to whom they had applied; but of the Power of Moses they must remain in some doubt, because they knew not to whom he applied, and their Delign was to judge of it by the Tryal of its Ability, whether it could do more 0301

•

er

as

of

hè

W

ty

ve

or,

nk

Its,

gh Na-

eal

Ted

ue

hey God

rose

ith-

the

hey

that

wer

Vite

OW-

ubt

lied,

d do

more

more than that with them. Whilst therefore the Works were alike, and the Transaction not yet ended, they could not determine that Mofes's Power was the fame with theirs, because they had not yet seen the end of his Work; and give another Decision, we may be fure they would not, whatever they might think, because they were engaged in opposing him. It may be therefore they faw not the Finger of God in Mofes's Works, until a stop was put to their own Power: And when this stop was put to them, they had no manner of Reason to see it in their own Works: In Moses's they must acknowledge it, because he proceeded; with themfelves they could not pretend it was, because they could not proceed. In looking back and comparing the Works wherein they were equal, they could but think that from thence they might have imagined that Mofer had been but like one of them, if he could have gone no farther than they could follow him; but now that they had feen him do what their Power could not affift them to do, they must acknowledge his to be the Power of God; but ground to think that theirs was the same Power, they could certainly have none.

A (Third) Question is now to be asked; namely, "Whether the Enchanters would "have attempted to turn Dust into Lice (as "it is plain they did attempt) if they had "thought

"thought the Finger of God more necessary " to perform that Miracley than the Three "foregoing ones?" A Wife Question to be asked of the World, that has hitherto thought the Enchanters to have done what they did by the Power of the Devil. No doubt the World will own that they made the Attempt, as thinking their own Powi er, or that at least which hitherto had affift ed them, could have done this also. How then did the Finger of God appear to them in this, he'll fay, if it was not thought that the Finger of God was more necessary to perform this than the other ? Even this would be no very puzzling Question, methinks, to the World. This is to be faid to it, That the Finger of God might hot appear to them in Moses's doing this more than any other of his foregoing Works, until after they made an Attempt to do the like with their Enchantments, but could not; and 'tis probable, if it had appeared before therein, they would not have made an Attempt to their own Shame : In their Difappointment therefore it was that the Finger of God appeared, as this discovered plainly the Power by which Mofes's Works were done.

The (Fourth) and concluding Question is therefore a meer Trifle; "Whether upon the whole Matter, when they acknow- ledge the Finger of God in the Works of Moses,

Ô

0

ıt

0

la

11

h

W

m

at

to

his

ne-

to

ear

niv

fter

rith 'ris

ein.

t to

ent

ap-

the

were

Cert

on is

ipon now-

s of

Tofes,

210 71

Effay.

33 .9

" Mofes, they did not also effectually ac-"knowledge, that the same Power had " wrought by themselves these Three great "Works, although they knew it not, nor " owned it, 'till they were disappointed in " their last Attempt ?" The World does not yet understand that they in effect acknowledged, nor that they ever thought of any fuch Thing, or had any cause to imagine the Power with Moses to have affifted them. These Magicians began to act against Moses upon their own Strength and Skill in Magick Art; they made use of their Enchantments for what they did; they proceeded to attempt their last Act without hesitation, or the least distruct of their own Power, or the help which they expected . They were profelled Magicians, who pretended to have Familiarity with, or probably, Power over Spirits and Dæmons invisible, for the doing of strange Works; they found themselves, and the Powers that affifted them stopped, in what a Man might have thought to have been an Act requiring less Power than some of their former Actions: 'Tis no way likely therefore that hence they should imagine the Power that had affifted themselves thould be that of God; but that Moses's was, they must hence be forced to acknowledge, be-Power is ablolute arient believes is ablolute it source inite, limited and reffrained; and that com

which appears refrained a thou

Effay, p. 48.

And thus, I think, we have well got over these Questions, but are not yet safe, for this Author is coming upon us again, and will ask us concerning the Power of the Devil, by which the World has hitherto supposed that these Enchanters wrought their Miracles: "Does the World (fays he) under-"Stand it, that the Devil has an Inherent "Power of his own to work Miracles indee pendently on God, and can commit that "Power to other Agents?" No, but it fup. poses the Devil to have a Power to work Miracles, and that he may empower his Agents alfo. Whether the Devil's Power in this Case be his Natural Power that he was created with, or fome Power given him for this particular Purpole, the World perhaps does not think it felf concerned to enquire, neither knows any certain means of being fatisfied, if it would make the Enquiry; but whatfoever his Power is, 'tis not thought to be independent of God, nor that he can commit it to any of his Instruments independently on him; i. e. otherways than by his permission, and in such degree as God shall please to permit the same. And this the World thinks to be the difference between the Power of God, and the Power of the Devil in working Miracles; the one's Power is absolute and omnipotent, the other's finite, limited and restrained; and that confequently which appears restrained, the World

World supposes is not to be thought the Power of God.

er

ill

il,

ed

a-

er-

ent

le-

nat

IP-

ork

A-

in

vas

im

er-

enof

qui-

not the

ents by

God

this

be-

er of

me's

ner's

con-

the

orld

But if the World will faill fay, That the Devil has a Power under God's Permission, and that God may permit the Devil to communicate his Power to Wicked Agents for their working Miracles, "This (our Author " fays) is going about: It is much easier, " and much more reasonable to say, that "God may see fit to make Wicked Men his " own Instruments in working Miracles, than "that he permits the Devil to make them " bis." It may, for ought I know, be as easie for some Men to say that which is false, as that which is true; that which has no Sense nor Reason in it, as that which has the most: The Easiness of Saying therefore I shall not controvert, but the Reasonableness. How when the Scripture hath told us of the Devil's opposing God and his Kingdom, and of his tempting and feducing Mankind from the Worship of the True God, and from his Righteousness, (nothing of which could be, but that there must be God's Permission in the Case) and likewise ascribeth great Power to the Devil in his Operations, and speaketh plainly of his working in the Children of Disobedience, and of Mens coming according to the working of Satan: It should be more reasonable to say, when Wicked Men have fet themselves to oppose the Messengers and Servants of God, and

in that Opposition done Things above Human Power; that God himself hath assisted them against himself, and made them his own Instruments in so wicked an Attempt; than that these were assisted by that Wicked Spirit, to do the Things done by them (which were above their own Power, as Men) and were Satan's Instruments therein. I believe there can be no need of Argument in this Case on my side; the very Proposal of the Case doth carry Reason sufficient with it to keep the World to its old Opinion.

Effay, P. 49.

But this Author will affirm positively (he fays) " That if the Devil has any Power to " work Miracles, he has it from God, and " can only exercise it when God permits "him. And moreover, that if at any time "the Devil can give Commission to Men to " work Miracles, (Power, with his leave, "let it be called, because a Rebel is seldom " understood to give a Commission) he can " never do it but when God permits him, "and for Purposes permitted by God." In all this I know not that any body will con-tradict him. "Pray then (fays he) is it "not as fit, and as likely that God should " give the Magicians Power to work Mira-"cles, as that he should give the same "Power to the Devil, and let the Devil " give it to the Magicians. He for his own part thinks God's Honour, Justice and "Goodd

S

t:

d

n

18

n.

nt

al

nt

)i-

he

to

nd

its

me

to

ve,

om

can

im,

In

on-

sit

ould

ira-

ame

evil

own

and

ood-

"Goodness are all as fase when Men are his "Instruments, as when he uses the Devil." I cannot conceive, notwithstanding, that it's either so likely, or so fit, that God should give the Power to Wicked Men, for that which they do against him, as that they have it from the Devil: I dare not think it likely that Men should be the Instruments of God, when they are doing the Works of the Devil; nor fit for us to suppose that God thould be the Agent helping them against himself: 'Tis likely God's Honour, and Juflice, and Goodness, are as safe when Men are his Instruments, as when he useth the Devil; but neither Men nor the Devil are God's Instruments in a wicked Attempt: In such a case Men either act of themselves, or are the Instruments of Satan. The Devil also acteth of his own Malice, himself employs the Power (which as a Creature he hath originally indeed from God, in the same manner as a Man hath his, when he committeth Sin, and doth wickedly; the Wicked Work is the Man's own Work, though his Power for that, and every other Action, is originally from God.)

Tis to little purpose that this Author pretends to argue, That God's helping Wicked Men to work Miracles for wicked Purposes, is not quite so bad as if he should use the Devil, and allow him to use Men for that Purpose: For could he say something to make

this

this probable, it could be no Argument

against what the Scripture speaketh plainly enough of the Devil's operating with wicked Men : Nevertheless there is nothing of moment in that which he fays, viz. "The "World is not so apt to believe that wicked " Men act by their own Power, as that the " Devil does; nor consequently so liable to " be feduced by one of their own Fellow " Creatures, as by that powerful fubtile Spi-" rit." As though the Snare would not be greater to Men in feeing Miracles wrought by wicked Men for Evil Purposes, if all Miracles be thought to be of God, than it can be as it's thought the Devil, who is an Evil Spirit, may work them: In the last of which Cases the Temptation is possible to be avoided; whereas in the former 'tis unavoidable: For that the Evidence of Miracles must be yielded to without exception: And as though the Devil were not as capable of making his advantage of Miracles wrought in opposition to God's Truth by Men, without his help as with it. Surely whatfoever advantage he or his Agents have ever made, or can be supposed to make in the World by Miracles, it cannot be from their being given out to be wrought by the Devil's Power, but from their being pretended to be of Ged; fo that his Advantage must be much greater than it is, if the

World should be of another Opinion than

that

that it now hath received concerning the

fubtile Operations of Dæmons.

99

F

1

1

9

0

(4

li:

e

ıt

11 it

III

of

to

n-

Γi-

n:

na-

les

by

ely

ve

in

om

the

ore-

age

the

han that

We are now come to a Medly of Arguments, very confusedly put together, with little Coherence, and less Argument: "The

"Devil's Power (fays our Author) depends Pag. 50.

"entirely on God, how far he will restrain "or limit him: We do not know how great "his Natural Powers in which God created

"him were, nor how much he loft by fal-

"ling from his Innocence and Obedience, nor confequently how much is fince that

"left to him." This, I believe, is all

true, but not a jot therein to his Purpose. What then follows hence? "I am inclin'd

to think (fays he) that the Supremest

"Angel, even in his Native Innocence, was not created with a Power of changing

the Course of Nature, &c." What should

make him inclin'd to think what Powers an Angel was or was not created with, when

he had just before said, we do not know

low great the Natural Powers in which God

reated these Beings may be? If another e inclined to think otherways than he, by

what means can he convince him? And

what will his Thought or Conjecture do hen towards the determination and end of

he Dispute concerning the Facts that are

hought to be Instances of the contrary?

ut let me not injure our Author, who has

dded these Words at the end of his Thought, 1900

H

name-

namely, without the Purpose and Appointment of God. Which Words, if understood in their large Sense, would make his Thought to be the same with the general Thought of the World: For God's Permission may be understood in some sense to be his Purpose and Appointment: And thus we should immediately agree in our Thoughts of this Matter. It would be forthwith allowed to this Author, that the Supremest Angel, whatfoever his Natural Powers may be, can do nothing towards the work of a Miracle without God's Permission; and consequently, that no Evil Spirit, how powerful foever, can do any thing but by his Permission. But Idoubt this Author understands God's Purpose and Appointment in a strict and restrained Sense, so as that God's Purpose shall imply the Communication of a Power to do the Thing appointed; which there is no doubt indeed but God can give to the meanest Being that is, whether it has Natural Powers for the Work, or no. And thus, as he fays, a Fly may work a Miracle with God's Leave and Order as foon as an Angel, (God's Of der always supposing a Power for doing the Thing by him ordered.) But this Author confoundeth himself, or would impose upo the World, by his confounding the Word Leave and Order, as though these were the fame; and Permission and Appointment though these were also the same Thing when

whereas every one knows Leave or Permiffion, and Order or Appointment to be different Things: Both are indeed included in the Purpose of God, but they are nevertheless sodifferent, that supposing only a Leave or Permission (which implies the Creature left at liberty by God to the use of its own Powers) he must be out of his Right Senfes, that will pretend to fay, a Fly may do as much as as an Angel, (God only permitting the one and the other alike to do their utmost, according to their Natural Powers); though all the while, were we to suppose God's Appointment and Order (in which, as being God's Order, which never can fail of its Effect, we must necessarily suppose a Power given with it fufficient for the Work) it must not be deny'd but that a Fly (as this Author fays) may alter the Course of Nature, and work a Miracle: We must therefore think either this Author to have perplexed himself with a mistaken Sense of Words, or that he designs to impose upon the World by a meer Equivocation, when he argues in fo weak a manner as this. That the Devil's Power is not increased by his Apostacy and Rebellion, I believe will be granted to this Author; yet that it is less than it was (when God shall think fit to take off the Restraint, under which we are informed in God's Word, that this Evil One is by him generally kept) is what neither

in ht of be

nt

ofe mhis

l to natnat-

acle atly, ever,

But

mply the

doubt A Be-

owers fays

Leave l's Or

ng the

e upon Word ere th

nent a

when

this Author nor I know: 'Tis not therefore for us to dispute concerning the Powers of this wicked Spirit, of which we know nothing otherways than by what Account we have thereof from Revelation and Scripture. Now the Scriptures (this Author here allows) attribute great Matters to him: These he is pleafed indeed to fay are made much greater than they are, by the Scriptures being ill understood; but he must shew that the Scriptures are not rightly understood, as to what they fay of the Devil's Power and Operations; until then, the obvious and received Sense of Scripture shall be our Direction in this Matter. "Yet even the Scripture in-"forms us (fays this our Author) that the "Devil is absolutely under God's Command; "and therefore let his Power be never fo " great, it must be exercised as God per-" mits, and limited and determined to what " purposes God shall please." What then Why, fays our Author, "Will it not then " from hence follow, that the Devil can no " more work a True Miracle, than you or I, " of his own accord?" Let him leave out the four last Words, and then ask the Question. If he will fay, I must not put out any of his Words, then he must give me leave to tell him, that 'tis all nothing but filly E-

quivocation. Of his own accord, in one sense, the Devil, how great soever his Power is, can do nothing more than one of us, being

ninder

Ibid.

under limitation and restraint; nay, not so much as one of us, if God shall think fit toconfine his Power to fo ftrict Limits, that he shall not be able to exert it to do that which one of us may do, when not under any Limitation, as to the use of our Natural Powers. But suppose all Limitation taken off from one and from the other (which must be supposed in God's Permission, for that always taketh off, or suspendeth all Limitation, fo far as the Permission extendeth) and the Devil left to the Powers he was created with, and this Author in like manner left at liberty to use his Natural Powers. and then let the Question be asked, Whiether that the Devil and the Man being both under God's Command, fo as that how great foever the Power of either of them be, in must be exercised as God permits only, and limited to what purpose God shall please; it will from hence follow, that supposing God to permit both of them alike to use the utmost of their Natural Powers, after their own will and accord, there being no limitation upon either, this subtile and powerful Spirit shall be able to do no more towards the Work of a Miracle, than this Author, or another Man? In vain therefore does our Author pretend to draw Consequences from Scripture in favour of his Hypothesis, which we shall by and by find directly to overthrow it. H 3 For

being

ill iphat ati-

re

of

10-

we

ire.

vs)

15

ter

ved 1 111 111the

and; r fo

perwhat hen

then n no or I,

t the resti-

any leave

ly Efense,

er is,

ninder

Effay, Pag. 55.

For there is a Text of Scripture in our Author's way, which he must do something with, or his Hypothesis must fall at once; and therefore his Scholar is taught to fay, "That it sticks with him, and he can have "no quiet, unless he please to tell him what "he must do with it." But at the same time he is to make an Objection against the Text also, such as may make way for this Author to put his particular Sense upon the Scripture, under the amusement of this Objection: The Scripture is that of Deut. 13. v. I. If there arise among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, of which he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods which thou hast not known, and serve them; thou shalt not bearken to the Words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul. "Should it not appear from hence (fays the Scholar) "that God may fome-"times permit a False Prophet to give a "Sign or a Wonder that may come to pass, " in order to try whether his People would be tempted to Idolatry?" Let us keep this Objector only from puttting upon us his own Words instead of the Words and Sense of the Scripture; let no more be faid or inferred as to God's End herein, than what the

r

g

1,

e

t

ie

le

is

10

b- .

3.

a

or

ne

ıg,

ou

not

pat

iod

ord

our

ice ne-

2

ass,

be

his

his nle

or hat

the

the Scripture faith, That the Lord hereby proveth bis People, to know whether they love the Lord their God with all their Heart, and with all their Soul: And it shall be allowed that the Scripture meaneth that God may fometimes permit a False Prophet to give a Sign or a Wonder that may come to pass; yea, it shall be allowed further, that as it could not be a Sign or a Wonder in the Scripture Sense, if the Thing could be done by fuch a Prophet of himself, therefore this Scripture shall imply that God may permit the Devil to affift such a False Prophet for the bringing fuch Sign or Wonder to pass. "But if God does this (fays he) how is it "that they must not hearken to him? "Shall a Miracle confirm the Belief of One "God, and not confirm the Belief of more "Gods than one, if wrought for that pur-"pose? If this be so, a Miracle must go "for nothing, and I may believe one God, "or more Gods, according as my Reason "leads me; for a Miracle proves both alike. This Objection is for our Author's Purpose, it shall help him to put a False Interpretation upon the foregoing Text of Scripture, or twill amuse us, he thinks, whilst he does t; therefore he makes answer to his Scholar, and tells him, That "he hath objected Pag. 56. right, but supposed amis, in supposing "the Sign or the Wonder here spoken of to be a Miracle." What will not this H 4 Man

Man put to the venture for the fake of his Abfurd Hypothesis? The Objection made against the Evidence which Miracles give to the True Religion, is allowed by him to be right and good, if this Scripture be taken in the received and common Sense wherein it hath been hitherto understood, and in the plain Meaning which the Words import; that is to say, That God may permit some-times a False Prophet to work a Miracle. I shall shew the weakness of the Objection by and by, when this Author himself comes to improve it, and make the most of it; in the mean time let notice be taken of the New Interpretation of this Scripture: To give a Sign or a Wonder, is in this Place (fays our Author) to foretell some wonderful Thing to come to pass: ——This must be further descanted upon, or else it will stand our Author in little stead, because indeed the certain foretelling of Future Events, is nothing less than a Miraculous Work: And yet it is too foon as yet for him to speak his Meaning plainly, and therefore he runs out into a long Talk upon a Supposition made out of his own Brain, and which he has not given us the least Reason to think at all relating to the Case this Scripture intended to speak of; that is to say, "of a Man pre-" tending to a Vision or Dream from God, " who to gain himself Credit, might ad-" venture to foretell some strange and un-

" expected

Ibid.

" expected Thing, and the Event coming to " país, might confirm his Prediction; as it " might come to pais, for that God might "not see fit to prevent its coming to pass "by altering any thing in the Course of his "Providence; and perhaps the Thing would "have come to pass whether foretold or "no; which Thing there would be no Rea-" fon to think that God permitted to come "to pass only to fulfil the Prediction, but "that God would not put it by, the Thing "being by himself intended, though it hap-"ned to be foretold by a False Pretender." Having run over this amufing Tale, he fays, "He takes this Visionary Dreamer here "mentioned to be but a meer Guesser, and "to predict Events of his own Head, some " of which may possibly come to pass." Which if spoken in reference to that Visionary Dreamer, his Fancy has dwelt fo long upon, 'tis likely he may not be mistaken in his Judgment: But if he thinks hence to infinuate, that that Scripture which speaks of the arising of a Prophet, or Dreamer of Dreams, that may give a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or Wonder come to pass of which he Spake; is to be understood to refer only to a Bold Gueffer that may take upon him to predict Events of his own Head, Some of which may possibly come to pass: The World, I hope, is not so foolish yet, but will ask him to give some Reason for an Interpretation so absurd:

to be

his

in in it the

ort;

I

mes; in

the : To

lace lerful It be

tand

s, is And

k his s out

made

s not

ed to

pre-

God,

d un-

ected

abfurd : For this must suppose God to give a very needless Caution to his People; and those scarce Rational Creatures to whom it was given. I believe the World was never fo easie and credulous as to take every Guesfer for a Prophet, but that Common Sense would have put Men upon making fome Tryal, and upon confidering whether there were any likelihood or probability of the Things being rather Guess than Prophecy. Had this been the Case, 'tis most probable they would have been directed to find it out by the same way that they were directed to find out Prophets by, that Spoke fally in the Name of God; speaking Things which he had not commanded them, Deut. 18. 22. viz. "When a Prophet Speaketh in the Name " of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor "come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord " hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath Spo-"ken it presumptuously." This could have been no Rule, nor way of Tryal, according to our Author's wild Imagination of a bold Guesser's being able to foretel Things future with any certainty; but 'twas a good Rule to them that could be supposed upon it to make Examination and Observations as to the Things spoken by such Prophet; for he that speaketh presumptuously, and of his own Head, if he happen to speak of one Thing that comes to pass, will speak of more that do not; and if any one thing come not to pass,

to

be

an

pe fal

ot] der

ger lati

cer.

the

ver

to t

be in

Sigr

refp

Prec

were

pass, it appeareth that the Lord bath not spoken by him: If therefore it could not be distinguished by the Appearances of Probability in the Thing foretold, so as thence to be known to be rather Guefs than Prophecy, it might at least by their Observation of the Event of fuch an one's Predictions. to be supposed likewise, that this Scripture which intends the preventing of God's People being feduced by a Sign or Wonder given and coming to pass, must have reference to such a Sign as would be thought a Wonder; and therefore if the foretelling a Thing to come to pass, were the Sign given, it must be the foretelling of something very strange and unufual, of which there could be no Appearance of Probability to make it likely to fall within any Man's Guess or Conjecture; otherwise the Prediction could be no Wonder, and consequently there could be no danger that fuch a thing should seduce to Idolatry: Especially as the People here concerned, were fuch as knew, and were acquainted with Miracles and Prophecies, and the Signs given by Prophets, and being conversant therein, could not easily be deceived to take Guess for Prophecies, and could not be themselves in danger, but from such Signs as were at least wondrous, and in that respect not easily distinguishable from the Predictions or Works of them that were indeed the Lord's Prophets. I shall here

e

n

Bit

o s,

I

n

S

n

P

fu

n

n

in

n

he

ed

Pr

be

be

Sho

to

his

pla

der

Ma

fer

in

here fay therefore, that as the Scripture, when it acknowledgeth the coming to pass of a Thing foretold to be the Sign and Evidence of a True Prophet, supposeth Mens Reason fufficient to diftinguish Guess from Prophecy; and must not be understood to acknowledge that in this Case a Sign, which a Man's Reason might think might be foretold by Guess or Conjecture; but only, that such Predictions should be taken for Signs, as were out of the way of Guess, and above the reach of Conjecture; whereof the Event should be according to the Prediction: So here the Sign meant must be a Wonder; fomething not eafily diftinguishable from the Signs usually given by God's Prophets; otherwise the People could not well be supposed to be in danger of being seduced thereby. These things (I presume) in fome measure foreseen by our Author, and therefore he will come at last to suppose him a True Prophet that's here spoken of, and the Sign or Wonder, to be the working a Miracle. I am one of them that suppose the Sign or Wonder here spoken of, to be the working a Miracle; but yet I am not for his turn, to suppose this Prophet a True Prophet: I allow him to be one that hath foretold a Thing that came to pass truly but I account him a false Prophet notwithstanding, as having the Devil's Help in effeeting that Sign or Wonder, which he giveth

Effay, P. 57, 58.

veth to perswade to the Worship of a false God. This our Author therefore leads us wrong, when he would draw us into a Supposition, that God inspires this Prophet with the Knowledge of future Events which he predicts, and which come to pass accordingly. For the same Reason that will conclude, that fuch an one is not to be trufted nor believed, will argue likewise that the Spirit of God cannot be with him; and that notwithstanding the Signs he giveth of a Prophet, he is no True Prophet, he is not of God. His tempting to Idolatry, must destroy his Credit as a Prophet, and is a sufficient Argument, that such Prophet is neither to be followed nor hearkened to, nor yet to be taken to be of God. This is in it self a sufficient Reason, why he should not be followed nor bearkened to; because herein he perswadeth to a Thing plainly wicked. This also is an Argument, why such Prophet should not be taken to be of God; because he talks absurdly, and cannot be believed, unless we should suppose God should contradict himself, and do a Wonder to perswade Men to forsake him, and give his Worship to another. I should in this place have expressed my self much beholden to our Author, for this Solution of the Matter, (for I would have the Reader obferve, that the Reasons which I have given in the Solution, why fuch Prophet should

S

e

It

0

m

;

p-

ed

in

nd

se

of,

ing

ole

be

not

rue

ath

ily

ith-

ef-

gi

reth

not be hearkened to, nor yet taken to be of God, notwithstanding his Sign, and the coming to pass thereof, are bis: and so good they are, that I would pray the Reader, and this Author himself also well to remember these Reasons; of which we may very likely have further Use: ) had he not involved this Right Solution of the Difficulty that is in the Case this Scripture refers to, with a false Supposition of his own, to which this Scripture hath no manner of reference. This makes me that I cannot thank him. for what otherwise I should have accounted my felf beholden. His Cunning and Artifice to draw us into a false Supposition, by mixing fome Truth with it, deferves little Thanks from those that discern it, and less from any that shall find themselves to have been led wrong by it. He may put the Case (as he does) of a Prophet that God might have formerly inspired with the Knowledge of future Events, who renouncing and apostatizing from him and his Truth, might go about to perfwade the People to Idolatry; and every body will agree with him, that fuch an one is no longer to be trusted, because we may be fure the Spirit of God must then depart from him; for God cannot contradict himself, nor do any thing to perswade Men to forsake him and give his Worship to another: And though this Man had formerly wrought Miracles, yet he were 1100

7

L

f

P

P

I

t

is

Effay, P. 57, 58. not upon the Credit of them to be believed, now that he talked abfurdly, nor followed now that he perswaded to a Thing plainly wicked. But he must not by this think to put upon us to far, as to bind us hereby to take his Supposition for the Case to which this Scripture referreth: For 'tis most plainfrom the Text it felf that this is not the Oafe; for this Scripture ('tis clear) speaketh of the coming to pass of a Sign or Wonder, whereof the Prophet spake unto the People at his faying, or when he faid, Let us go after other gods; and therein supposeth the Prophet at the time when he thus endeavoured to feduce, appealing in his Predi-Gion to an Event that was yet to come: And this indeed was a Thing that might increase the Wonder, and therein the Credit of the Prophet, whereby there was the more danger of the People's being seduced. And if we should suppose the Sign or Wonder given, to be in an Instance of any other kind than this of foretelling a Thing future; yet this Scripture will oblige us to suppose it a Present Transaction, offered or done for a present Conviction; which the Prophet must speak of, and which must come to pass at the time of his saying, or forthwith upon his saying, Let us go after other gods. Therefore, this our Author's Case of a Man that might formerly have wrought Miracles, is plainly not the Case in the Text; which fuppo-

d

V

e

S

76

ne

od

W-

nd

ht

la-

m,

ed,

fod

an-

to his

Man

vere

1100

supposeth them at that present time actually wrought. This Scripture indeed will reach the Case that he puts, of a Prophet whom God might have formerly inspired with the Knowledge of future Events; should such an one apostatize and go about to perswade the People to Idolatry; who, if he should come and offer a Prediction for this purpose, even at the time of his attempting to feduce, were neither to be hearkened to nor believed; nay, his present Prediction, though even then coming to pass, were not to be taken to be of God, though it were khown that God formerly inspired him; because (as this Author rightly observes) we may be sure the Spirit of God must now be departed from him. And if no notice must be taken of such a one's present Miracles, much less of any that he might formerly have wrought. But this Scripture's reaching the Case by this our Author supposed, can be no reason for its being confined to this Case, when we evidently see it to reach much beyond it; even to the Cale of any false Prophet's actually working Miracles, at the present time that he endeavoureth to seduce; and to the Case of whatfoever strange Prophet might appear with fuch a Power.

I shall yet give this Author and the World further Reasons, Why this Prophet here spoken of, is to be thought one that -odani

fhould

ha

bh

n

00

re

Th

vhi

een

oul

ere

o th

erst

ime

ble

should do that which might be looked on as Miraculous, and which the People should not be able to distinguish from a Miracle; And why also we are not to suppose of such a Prophet, that he should be inspired by God, but by some Evil Spirit. And they are such Reasons, as ought to convince, and will, I think, put the matter out of all doubt, for that they are grounded upon the

Scripture.

e.

-

s

)-

1it

se

si-

ea-

atith

the

The (First) is this; That the True Prediction of Things future, is a Miraculous Work: If it were not fuch, it would not have been in Scripture faid as it is, to be a Sign of a Prophet's being fent of God, fer. 28. v. 9. When the word of the Prothet shall come to pass, then shall the Prophet be known, that the Lord bath truly fent bim. Nor would that Challenge have been made n Ifa. 41. V. 23. Shew the Things that are o come hereafter, that we may know that ye re gods. If the Prediction therefore of Things future, be the supposed Instance to which this Scripture in debate refers, and which indeed the Words themselves tem to have a plain reference; I will not oubt to conclude, that the Sign or Wonder ere spoken of, as coming to pass according the Word of fuch Prophet, must be unerstood to be a Miracle; or, which is the het me thing in effect, what is not distinguishhat ole from it. And again (2dly.) this may buld

be upon fure Grounds supposed, and therefore ought to be supposed; because the Devil hath pretended in this to imitate God. And as his Knowledge is great, as penetrating into the Springs, Causes, and Effects of Nature; and as his Experience throughout all Ages may have still more discovered to him the Connections and Dependance of these; hence it may be no difficult thing for him to foretel, or affift a wicked Prophet to foretel Things future, with some measure of Certainty; which the World may reasonably think to be above Human Power to find out and predict, and which coming to pass, it may be in danger of mistaking for a really Divine Operation. And that this Thing of the Devil's operating after fuch a manner, and the World's millaking and being feduced by fuch his Opention, hath been in Fact True, the Holy Scriptures do suppose and plainly suggest in that which is said therein, of Men using Divination, Enchanters, Witches, Consulter with Familiar Spirits, &c. Deut. 18. v. 10 11. And in what is spoken of False Pro phets among God's People, pretending to Dreams and Visions, Having Seen Vanity and Lying Divination, saying the Lord saith, and the Lord hath not Sent them; and who mad others to hope that they would confirm the word, Ezek. 13. v. 7. And (3dly.) The those fort of Prophets also Prophesied fedu0

Stat

4

44

4

44

59

46

D

W

pl

éd

to

9

5

e

t

d

10

ld

an

ch

ni-

nd

af-

sta-

ra-

oly

eft

using

lters

10

Pro

ig to

y and

, an

m44

n th

Tha

ied t

edu

seduce the People to Idalatry, (the very Case we are upon ) is plainly intimated, as I take it offerem 123 v. 13. I have feen folly in the Prophets of Samaria; They have Prophehed in Baal, and caused my People to err; that is to fay, Seduced them to the Worship of Baal : And moreover, that these fort of Prophets had some affistance from Evil Spirits in their Divinations and Prophecies, I take to be also plainly suggested Zachar bala to fall come to pass, faith the Lord of Holls, that I will cut off the Names of the Idels out of the Land, and they shall not more be remembred; and alfoll will cause the Prophets and the Unclean spirit to pass but of the Land; (what is that, but the unclean Spirit that was with, and that affifted those Prophets ). And it's further faid chere, "It shall come to pass, that "when apy shall yet prophete, then his Fa-"ther and his Mother that begat him shall "fay, Thou shalt not live, for thou speak-"eft Lyes in the Name of the Lord; and "his Father and his Mother that begat him thall thrust bim through when he prophesi-"That is to fay, his nearest Relations should kill him, as in this Place of Deut. 13. v. 5. they are commanded. To which Command of the Lord's, as the Prophet Zachary must be understood undoubtedly to refer; fo that his Cafe and Reference to this Command, cannot but be an unde-PRINT niable here, Deut. 13. as giving a Sign or a Wonder, is one that might be affifted to the doing it

by an unclean Spirit. to 210 4019 sil

It may be this Author, or somebody for him, may be apt to think and object, that this is in effect to suppose the Devil's Knowledge equal to the Prascience of God. But this I deny; for that it is in the Power of God at all times to hinder the Event to follow, which fuch a false Prophet by the Divil's affiftance may predict, even though it would certainly follow in the usual Course of Nature. God can prevent the Effects of Natural Causes, and its in his Power also to keep any thing himself will do, from the knowledge of this wicked One, because he is able to work out of the way of Nature; and probably also the Devil knoweth not the Deliberations of Free Agents, nor how these will determine themselves! And upon this it's faid in the Prophet Hai. 41. v. 23. Shew these things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are Gods. For that the Devil, how great foever his Knowledge is, cannot foretel himself, nor consequently assist any false Prophet to predict what things shall come bereafter, with absolute certainty; God having always Power to put by the Event, if he shall think, and whenever he shall think fit so to do. Nevertheless, atthough the Devil cannot with absolute certainty

ti

ai

CC

D

fo

jed

Wi

to

of

Go

tainty know or affift to the foretelling things future, especially such as depend upon the Will of God, or perhaps on the Will of Men; nor indeed in one respect, even those things that are certain in their natural Caufes, because in these and in all Cases God hath Power to disappoint and defeat the Prediction, and prevent the Thing from coming to pass; Yet, whenever God shall permit this Evil Spirit to do his utmost in this way, and to affift a False Prophet in any thing of this kind ; it cannot be denied but that the Devil (who hath the advantages of knowing all Natural Causes, and their Powers and Strength, and confequently gathering what Effects will follow fuch and fuch Causes, either absolutely, or at least if so and so applied, and likewise of whatfoever things are done or likely to be done in remote and distant Places; and of knowing also much of the Temper and Inclinations, as well as the Manners and Studies, and Counsels, (so far at least as these are communicated even fecretly to others) of Men; and even fomething probably of the Determination of the Will of Free Agents, fo far as the Observation of Things and Objects, that may have wrought upon the Will of fuch Agents in like Cases, can help to guess towards that Determination; and of knowing likewise even something of God's Will, and of the Things depending upon

1,

at

ge ly

igs

V;

he

he

al-

er-

inty

upon that, i.e. fuch as at any time, either in Scripture, or by any Prophet of his may have been Revealed as coming to pass hereafter, or what he may have commanded any Ministring Spirits of his, or may have permitted Satur, or any of the Evil Spirits that are with him, to bring to pass) from this great Advantages of Knowledge and Subtilty, may be capable of affifting to the foretelling Things future in such a manner, that when his Agents shall pretend to give a Sign of that Nature, the Vulgar and indeed the most observing Men may not be able to judge any other from the Sign it felf, and the Event following, according to it; but that they must come to the knowledge of it by some Divine Power. And thus the Devil and his Agents may be able to work a Miracle, or what is not distinguishable from a Miracle: Which upon good Grounds, you fee, I have concluded to be the Case spoken of here, Deut. 13. v. 1. where I judge also that the Sign or Wonder spoken of, may have reference also to any other Miraculous Sign or Wonder that a False Prophet might pretend to, or promise to effect, as well as to this the Prediction of things future, which seems to be the Sign particularly nominated: Because the Reason of one, and of the other is the fame; The Devil's Power may affift in other Cases as well as this; and if it does, noqu

1

k

ti

to

tl

I

o' ei

does, and God does not think fit to prevent the Events coming to pass, the Prophet however is to be rejected, let his Miracle be of what kind it will; and may be rejected in any case upon the same grounds as in this.

And now is it time that I should take in hand the Objection that was for a while laid by; namely, If it be thus that God permits a Prophet to work a Miracle, that shall tempt to Idolatry by it, "How is it that his " People must not hearken unto him?" To this Essay. I would not defire to make a better Answer p. 55. than may be made in the Words of our Auther ( who I hope will give me leave to put his Words together for the purpose, and fay, ) Such Prophet Tempting to Idolatry Pag. 57. (though working Miracles) is not to be and 58. Trusted nor Believed; for that we may know the Spirit of God cannot be with him (never was with him, or at least is now departed from him ); for God cannot contradict himself, nor do any thing to perfuade Men to forfake him, and give his Worship to another: Such Prophet is not to be believed therefore, nor even for his Miracles to have any Credit with us, for that he talkes abfurdly and perfuades to a Thing plainly wicked. (This our Author I hope will not go about to overthrow his own Reasons; neither can he if he would, either deny the Reason, or hinder me from making I 4

S

S

h

n-

e,

he

e-

or

nd

his

ms

Be-

her

it

oes,

fi

(

n

ir

IJ

01

ty

19

fe

lil

th

th

W

th

in

he

fag

fee

an

Te

fee

it

thu

" 1

" I

2

in H

44

making use of it to the purpose I have in hand ). But hear how the Objection is carried on further! "Shall a Miracle confirm "the Belief of One God, and not confirm "the Belief of more Gods than One, if wrought " for that purpose? If this be so, a Mira-" cle must go for Nothing; but I may be-" lieve One God, or more Gods, according as " myReason leads; for a Miracle, I see, proves "both alike." This Objection that appears so formidable, would indeed be asnothing, if the Case were proposed aright and according to its True State; in order to which, a Man that would make an Objection to the purpose, (and consequently we that are concerned to fee, whether this Objection be made to the purpose) must, (because he ought) consider as well the Persons to whom this Command was given, not to hearken to fuch a Prophet as should give a Sign or a Wonder to seduce them to Idolatry, as the Miracles God had wrought in the fight of this People to Confirm them in the Belief and Worship of the One True God; and then the Miracles thus wrought on God's part are to be brought into Comparison with the Miracles he may permit a false Prophet to work, to seduce to the Worship of other Gods. And whosoever will go about to make an Objection without considering this, disputes to no purpose, and really makes no Objection at all, because he

he speaks not to the Case; he goes off from the real Matter and its Circumstances. Observe we now that the Command given, not to hearken to this False Prophet working a Sign or a Wonder, was to the People of Ifrael, a People whom God had delivered out of the Ægyptian Bondage with a mighty hand, who had not only seen, in the Miracles wrought before Pharaoh and themfelves, that the Lord was with Moses, but likewise in the Contest that Moses had with the Magicians, and the Issue thereof, that there was none like unto the Lord their God; who had also seen the great Work which the Lord did upon the Ægyptians, in drowning them in the Red-Sea, through which he had made for this his People a safe Pasfage, by dividing the Waters; who had feen God talking with them from Heaven, and the Mount that burnt with Fire, and the blackness and darkness and Tempest Striking Terror at the giving of his Law; who had feen his Miracles for Farty Tears, that he led and fed them in the Wilderness. Might it not be reasonable that this People that had thus feen the Power of the Lord their God. "his Greatness, his mighty Hand, his Deut. 11. "stretched-out Arm, and his Miracles, and "his Acts which he did in the midst of Æver "gypt, unto Pharaoh the King of Ægypt, those, and unto all his Land; and what he did use " unto the Army of Ægypt; and what he he

e

d

0

nt

m

ue ht

m-

ta

he

T

G

G

01

be

ne

85

if

af

in

m

up

on

RO

po

wf

is

wl

the

con

"did unto themselves in the Wilderness, un-"till they came unto that Place;" that is to fay, the Borders of the promised Land, which they were now upon entring, when Mofes spake to them of the Statutes of their God, which 'twas expected they should Ob. ferve : Might it not be reasonable, I say, that this People should, among others, have this Command; viz. If there should arise a Prophet, and he should give them a Sign or a Wonder that might come to pass, to seduce them to go after other Gods, not to hearken to the words of that Prophet? Might it not also be allowable for God to prove this People after all this done for their Conviction, by this method, whether they loved the Lord their God with all their Heart and all their Souls? Whofoever will object in this Case against the Lawgiver, or against the Reasonable. ness of his Command, must propose the gre do Objection according to the Cafe and the true Circumstances thereof, otherwise the Objection made upon a wrong Supposition of Por the Case falls of it self. In this instance Lo therefore the Objector's Question must run the thus, — Shall a Series of Miracles, such as sho must have put out of all doubt the certain. Sign ty of an Omnipotent Being, and have like-work wise shewn the God of Israel to be the Lord, God the Mighty God and Terrible, and that there dion hath done; confirm the belief of the One was True

1,

n

r

)-

y,

le

4

a

m ne

be

er

bis eir

S?

nst

le-

he

rue )b-

of

nce

run

True God to a People to whom the Lord God had particularly shewn his Glory and Greatness? And to this I am perfuaded. our Author's Scholar as well as himself would be ashamed to Subjoin their Question, - Shall not a Sign or a Miracle confirm this People as well in the Belief of more Gods than One, if wrought for that purpofe? And still more ashamed must they be, I should think, of having faid that Miracles prove both alike. They must bear with me therefore ; when I take upon me to fay, that the Objection goes upon a false Supposition, and the Objector is not a fair Adversary. The Objection suppofes a Miracle on one fide and on the other, which is as wide from the Matter as the East is from the West; for on the one hand, what this People had to Confirm them in the Belief of the One True God, was a continued Series of Miracles, so many and so great as must have confirmed them beyond doubt of the certainty of an Omnipotent Power; and likewife shewn them that the Lord their God was above all Gods: This therefore is that against which the Objector as should have set on the other hand, the sign or Wonder which a false Prophet might ike work to perswade to the Worship of other ord, Gods. But if the whole Antecedent Convihere dien, which this People had of the Lord's he being the only God, (before this Command One was given them, not to hearken to any True false

Po

the

Goi

Lo

cor tha

Mi

hav

wi

nią

the

bef

Por

mis

in (

the

we

and

tho

this

cou

cled

reaf

One

mus

ding

of f

by t

Was

false Prophet though shewing a Miracle, should he perfuade them to the Worship of strange Gods ) should have been taken no. tice of, the Objection would have looked Ridiculous, and given a Confutation to its felf. Again, this Objection supposeth all Miracles to be wrought by equal Powers, and that they prove alike; which is a Supposition not to be taken for granted in this Case, where the People (before Confirmed by Miracles in the Belief of the One True God, and now commanded not to hearken to a false Prophet though giving a Signora Wonder, if he should persuade them to go with him after other Gods) had been given to understand, or were at least at the same time given to understand, that there were Diviners, Consulters with familiar Spirits, &c. in the World, to whom they are told, that other Nations hearkened ( which they must suppose was on account of great Things done by them ) but as for them the Lord their God had not suffered them so to do. Mofes tells them, (probably referring to this Command, Cap. 13. ) Deut. 18. ver. 10, 14. withal, this very People had feen Miracles wrought by the Magicians in opposition to Moses, and thence could not be ignorant that different Powers might possibly work Miracles; who, (as they had also seen from the Things which God wrought by Moses, and the stop that he put to the Magicians Power,

d

3

S,

S

d

e

n

2

0

n

10

re

C.

at

ıft

gs.

rd

10-

is

4.

les

to

int

rk

ans er.

Power, that there was an Inequality nevertheless in these Powers; and that among the Gods there was none that could do as the Lord their God had done ) should have been confidered in these Circumstances, by him that would pretend to fay what Effect the Miracles of a false Prophet should in reason have, or be allowed to have, with them; with them, that is to fay, who had an undeniably sufficient Conviction in Reason of the Being and Power of the One True God before, and a Knowledge also that other Powers besides that of the Omnipotent God, might work Miracles, but could not stand in Competition with His; a Thing which they had actually seen with their Eyes, as well as they had feen the Glory, Greatness, and Power of the Lord their God in all those great Asts which he had done. Had this been taken into Consideration, there could have been no pretence that the Miracle of a false Prophet might give them a reasonable ground to believe more Gods than One; nor that the Miracles of the True God must go for nothing, because of his forbidding his People to hearken to the Miracles of fuch as he had shewn them to be no Gods, by the Things that had been done in their Sight, to make it appear that His Power was above them. one of none and neit cles upon Miracles. es, A Miracle where n

tadWpention is, cannot be the fame Courfee

2

P

no

b

h

ei

b

nit

e

t

"

-

4

-

0

( t

F

C

1

İ

What will the World think here of that Concession which this our Author hath made to his Scholar's Objection above mentioned a saying, — Tou have objected right, but supposed amiss; but pretending to shew his Supposition to be False, in the only Thing indeed where the Supposition was Right, without taking the least notice of the Falshood of his Supposition in those Things wherein he had evidently supposed wrong. The most Considering, I am apt to think, as well as Unconsidering People, will be likely to suspect sooner than approve it.

Effay, Pag. 59.

Vid. Epist.

Dedicat.

Pag. 7.

But I must now consider what our Author himself says in the Improvement of his Scholar's Objection: "You are by no "means to suppose that God should suffer "fuch a Prophet to work a True Miracle for " this would be to tempt People from God by the fame Means he used to keep them "upright; and to confirm the Belief of "Idols by the same Course he took to per-" fuade them of the Unity of the Godhead; "namely, by Miracles; which would be " building and pulling downwith the fame "Hand." But is there any Argument in all this, if it be neither the fame Method, nor the Same Course, nor the Same Hand ? A Sign or a Wonder, a fingle Miracle, or more than one, is not the fame Method as Miracles upon Miracles. A Miracle where no Competition is, cannot be the same Course as a Comf

0

(1

y:

\$

e

5

,

S

0

or.

19

10

er

10

od

m

of

er,

ad:

be

me

in

nor

ign

ore

ira-

no e as

om-

a Competition in Miracles, and an Evidence given of a Superiority of Power in that Competition: The Finger of God, and the Power of the Devil are not the Same Hand; nor is it any wonder that the Devil should endeavour to pull down what God hath built up; nor yet that God should suffer him to attempt it by the utmost of his Power, though this might do even some such Things as God had shewn his own Power by; because God had before sufficiently made known the Superiority of his Power in these Works to the People here concerned, and shewn it in a fair Tryal to be above the Power of fuch as were Devils and no Gods.

But let us hear further ; -You fee "what a Monstrous Absurdity (fays he) "there is in this, that the One and only "True God should let a Man work a Mi-"racle to persuade Men there were other "Gods:" It might be an Absurdity indeed if God himself had done no more, or could do no more to shew, the One and only True God: But he had done more a great deal before this, than ever any fuch False Prophet was or will be permitted to do; and he has always the same Power to out-do and controul all that the Devil or his Agents shall be fuffer'd to do for such a Pur-True Bellat of one God . He will alog

amor a sight and I to we

Yet this Author fays further, "They who think that God would ever fo tempt his "People (let it rather be express'd accord-" ing to the truth of the Case, Suffer his " People to be so tempted, that he might " prove them) will be at a loss to find how "it is possible for him to undeceive them." But is this so great an Absurdity? What if God should please never to go about to undeceive such as should be guilty of so great a Crime, as to be drawn off to the worship of Strange Gods, though by the pretence of a Miracle, after fo great an Evidence as they had before of the Being and Power of the One True God ? Or what if those who think that God may fuffer his People to be thus tempted, to prove them; and are of this Opinion, because they think the Scripture speaks it in very plain Words; what, I say, if these should be at a loss to find what way might be taken to undeceive this People fo deluded by a Miracle? Are they therefore to give up a Truth, because they cannot tell how to folve a Difficulty lying against it? Or is it not possible for God to undeceive his People in fuch a Case, because we cannot find a Method for it?

i

2

H

te

ui fa

fa

I

a an

w<sub>c</sub>

fer

the

of and

hac

mig

Effay,

"A Miracle (fays our Author) cannot

P. 59, and "do it, for 'twas a Miracle led them into

"the Error, and unhinged them from the

"true Belief of one God. He will therefore be bold to fay, "That this is a Temp
"tation

"tation from which there is no way to "escape." If he means, before their being actually seduced there was no way of escaping fuch a Temptation, he must be told the contrary; a regard to the Charge and Warning God had given them, and their rejecting fuch a False Prophet according to it, had been the way to escape. And to this let there be no Reply, lest it be found to strengthen the Hands of the Wicked. If he intends only to fay this; That on supposition of their being once feduced, there is no way to escape from this Temptation: Can he prove that it would not be just in God to leave fuch, as when they knew the only True God, would nevertheless for sake him, and go after other Gods, to believe a Lye? But if God should think fit at any time to go about to undeceive them, I would not have any Man lay, that the Temptation he suffer'd them to tall by, is fuch as there is no way to escape: I will make no Question but God can find a way to recover Men from this Delufion; and I persuade my self that this Author would willingly be understood as arguing against Men only that are of an Opinion ditterent from himfelf, and labouring to bring these under an Absurdity, in believing that of God which they cannot account for; and that 'twas an overfight in him that he had not made an Exception for what God eremight be able to do in such a Case. But mpyer tion K

K

\$

is

re

y,

ay so

re

ell

t?

ive

an-

not

into

the

yet let him be understood only to hold an

Argument with Men, he may perhaps find himself to have been too forward in saying what he has faid with too much politiveness, and too little consideration. I will put a Case which this Author shall never be able to deny but that it's truly put, and parallel every way to that supposed in the Scripture that's now in dispute between us, and exactly corresponding in that Supposition which has brought the Sense of this Scripture into debate. The Cafe that I will suppose, is a Thing that was true in Fact, viz. That many in Ifrael were feduced from the True God to be Worshippers of Baal; I will allow it also to be here supposed, that the Prophets of Baal might work fome Miraeles, and that by these the People were seduced; for even this is also probable to be true. "Tis most likely it was so, from that which is faid, Fer. 23. v. 13. "I have feen " folly in the Prophets of Samaria, they prophefied in Baat, and caused my People Ifrael to err." Something of this kind might probably be when Ifrael was first feduced to the Worship of that Idol: For as the Prophets of Baat were many in the Days of Elijah, fo they had the Confidence not to decline the Challenge of that Prophet; they took the Bullock that was given them for the Sacrifice, and dreffed it, and called of the Name of Baal from Morning till Noon

t

n

T

A

Ê

W

ać

fin

fed

Fal

Jer. 23. V. 13. and even after the Prophet Elijah mocked them, they went on until the time of the Evening Sacrifice, crying aloud, and cutting themselves with Knives and Lancets after their manner, until the Blood gushed out upon them. This Proceeding and Attempt of theirs will give us ground to suppose that they had some hope of bringing it to pass, that their Idol God might make a Fire to come down from Heaven in the fight of the People, to confume their Sacrifice, and that they were used to prophesie after this manner; that is to fay, to cut themselves with Knives and Lancets, for obtaining the fpecial Affiftance of their Idol God in other cases, which 'tis likely they found upon occasion, in the use of these Superstitious Rites; and this might encourage them to undertake what they did. 'Tis very probable therefore that I have not supposed amis, in putting the Case, That the People of Israel were seduced by some Miracles to the Worthip of Baal, seeing that his Prophets did not flick at making an Attempt towards a Thing strange and miraculous. Now as the Almighty God found a way by his Prophet Elijah in this Case to undeceive this People, whosoever has taken notice of that Transaction, methinks should not be at a loss to find a way for God to undeceive a People seduced to Idolatry by the Miracles of a Falle Prophet. 'Tis without all doubt, that .

n.

a

fe-

be

hat

(een

pro-

rael

ight

ed to

Pro-

of E.

o de-

they

n for

led on

NOOR

30

K 2

23

as in this Cafe the Challenge of Elijah to these Prophets of Baal to prepare their Sacrifice, and call on the Name of their Gods, as he on the Name of the Lord, and for the God that should answer by Fire to be God, was a Means to undeceive the deluded People, and cause them on sight of the Event to fall on their Faces, and fay, The Lord he is the God; the Lord he is the God: So the confronting of fuch Miracle-workers at any time by a True Prophet affifted by the Power of God, fuch a one's Challenge of them to a Competition, and the Stop that he shall give to their Power, shall at any time whenfoever God pleafeth to fend a Prophet for this purpose, prove the others to be Falle Prophets, and their Idols to be no Gods.

Let not now this our Author go about to give countenance to his False Hypothesis, by vindicating God's Justice in this Proceeding in a wrong way; I will make no Question but the Justice of the Almighty shall appear in Truth better a great deal than in that which is False: As there is no need of any one's talking wickedly, fo neither is there any need of our supposing falsly for God. It shall be no impeachment of either God's Goodness or Justice that he permit that Sign or Wonder to come to pass, which might be foretold by a False Prophet (even though it were supposed a thing foreknown by him, and fuch as could not be foreknown by him with

46

fq

tl W

without the affiftance of fome Damon) with defign to persuade to Idolatry: Not even though God could prevent it if he faw fit, and by not preventing, fuffers this Temptation to be laid for fuch as will be fo foolish and so wicked as to fall into it : Justice will not constrain him to prevent it, although he fee that a wicked People will be feduced by occasion of it; sufficient Proof having before been given of his Omnipotent Power, and therein of his being the only True God, and fufficient Caution against Idolatry, and against False Prophets that might attempt to feduce them to it : And the Infinite Goodness of God having employed that Power which had shewn it felf infinite to them in its mighty Works, in doing thefe Miracles for their benefit, might be well allowed furely after this, to prove this People, that it may be known whether they love the Lord their God. "If this be a Temp-"tation, God will venture it, as well he Effay, Pag. 61. " may; he will permit this Sign or Won-"der to come to pass, and will not go out " of the appointed Course of his Providence " to hinder it, that he may fee whether his "People will remember and obey his Warn-" ings and his Precepts." I have used here for the most part our Author's own Words, that it may be feen that the very famethings which he has faid to vindicate God's Justice upon his Falle Supposition, will vindicate it

K 3

r

y

on

ear

1at

ny

iny

nall

od-

101

t be

hit

1im,

him

vith

upon that which is the True one; that is to fay, in the Case of God's permitting a Man to work a Real Miracle, who may go about to seduce to the Worship of other Gods: God cannot in this Case be said to intend the Seducing the People, it's the Devil and his Instruments and Agents that are the Tempters, and that form the Temptation: God indeed makes an use thereof to prove his People, and what he, properly speaking, can be faid to intend, is the Prevention of the Effect of this Temptation, as to the Devil's Purpose, and the Evil Intent of his Agents; which is God's End in the Warning, and Caution, and Charge given to his People, not to bearken to such a Prophet, even though the Sign be gave should come to pass.

Effay, Pag. 63.

nogu

for God in this Case, "If God indeed, after "this Prophet had endeavoured to entice the "People to Idolatry, had given him the Pow-"er of working a Miracle, he had in some fense tempted his People by that Miracle, "for then his Miracle had given him Cre-"dit in that he should afterwards deliver as "his Doctrine." As though he had found a way for God's Justice to be safe, if we would admit his Supposition, that in case this Scripture be understood to speak of Miracles, it should be thought to be only of a Prophet that had been farmerly enabled by God

a

a

God to work Miracles. Were it to be fupposed indeed, that God gave this False Prophet the Power to work this Miracle, there would be need of this his Supposition; for if God himself gave the Power, he must be the Agent to give Credit to this False Prophet, and would by that have an actual hand in the Temptation: But as this is not the Case in this Scripture, which plainly supposeth the False Prophet to speak of, and promise to the People a Sign or a Wonder, when he said to them, Let us go after other Gods; and that this Sign or Wonder of which he spake to them then, came to pass according to his Word: I will not doubt but that God's Justice shall be safe in the very Case this Scripture speaketh of; that is to fay, whilft God permitteth the False Prophet to work a Miracle at the time when he feeketh to feduce, and even though he fuffer the Thing to come to pass foretold for this very purpose: It cannot with any Reafon or Justice be faid in this Case, so long as the Hand of God is not in the Miracle, that God tempteth his People to Evil: In one, which is the good Senfe of the Word tempteth, that is to fay, tryeth or proveth, it may; but in the ill Sense of the Word, as tempting to Evil, the Wicked Spirit, and the False Prophets his Agents, are only concerned; these are they that seek to seduce, and that act in this wicked Work: God on-K 4

e

2-

as

nd ve

fe

1-

2

by

od

ly permitteth those, and suffereth their Work to come to pass, to prove indeed his People, but with an intention of preventing the Evil of the Temptation, by the Notice and Caution given them before. This Author therefore has not dealt fairly, as he feeks to infinuate, that those who are of a different Opinion from him, as to the Sense of this Scripture, do generally fo understand it; as if God who permitted this False Prophet to work a Miracle, should permit it in order to feduce them: Whereas what we think, is, that the whole purpose of seducing is in the Devil and his Agents that labour to feduce: The Use which God makes of this their Evil Purpose, is to prove his People; and if the Means by which this is to be done, must be supposed to come within his Intent in the Permission, yet the Evil therein ought not to be supposed within that Intent; for that the Caution given to prevent their being seduced thereby, doth plainly flew it God's Intention to prevent the Evil of this Temptation. But he feems to press our Supposition further with this; That it does not affign fome other Purpose for which this Miracle should be wrought, than to give the false Prophet Credit: As though we were concerned to find a good Purpole for the Devil, whom we suppose to be the worker of the Miracle, or his Agents for whom he would get Credit among Mankind. It's enough tor

I

tl

66

A

ly

ci

A

"

66

"

"

for us, that what we apprehend to be the Purpose of God in this Case, cannot be charged with Evil, and that we are not at any loss for the Reasons of this Permission, nor under any Difficulties about the Event, knowing that God is able to produce Good out of Evil, and to controul the Power of Satan at his pleasure, whereby this Power of the Wicked One shall turn to his Praise, and the rest of it will he restrain.

There is one Thing which this Author has faid, that I could not well take notice of until I had done with his Argument; to which I shall however look back, because I think there may be some use made of it. "can never think, he fays, that God should "enable a Man to work a Miracle, and then "appoint him to be put to Death for doing "it, as we find it Deut. 13. 5. i. e. in the "Place and Case we are upon." I am altogether of his Mind in this, and do think the Answer given by his Scholar to him; namely, 'Tis not for working a Miracle, but for the ill use he makes of it, to be very insufficient. And this for the Reason given in our Author's Reply, viz. "That he could not "have had fuch a Powerful Pretence to fe-"duce to Idolatry, had not God enabled "him to work that Miracle. And this Scrip-"ture also seems to shew us, that God to "try his People, allowed of the Miracle, in " order to seduce them if they will be so se-"duced."

e

e

e

ot

it

n-

11-

af-Ai-

the

on-

vil,

the

uld

ugh

"duced." It is very much to me that this Author should not see this was an Argument against himself, and find it necessary hereupon to think that which is generally thought, viz. That it is not God, but the Devil that enableth this False Prophet to work his Miracles, which God may permit, and yet justly punish this Wickedness.

The End of the First Part.

Bowalla Shous I w

rodoluce telescolotes

RE.

to
Mey
Th
(Th
did
as

cep wel

desi

## REFLECTIONS

ONTHE

## SECOND PART

OF THE

## Essay upon Miracles.

of the Essay, to consider the Works of our Saviour Christ; and must follow him in the Method he proposeth for it; which is (First) to consider, That it was expected that the Messah should work Miracles. (Secondly) That the Lord Jesus did actually work them. (Thirdly) For what End he said himself he did them. In the Consideration of which, as his Scholar is allowed to make what Exceptions and Objections he can, it will be well if we do not find the Author himself designedly leaving room for that purpose.

-

1

V

t

n

C

1

1

f

t

C

1

k

V

d

5

In the first of these I readily agree with this Author, That it was expected the Christ should work Miracles; as the Prophet 1. faiah had plainly prophesied of his time, faying; Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an bart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, &c. Which, though capable of being understood as Metaphorical Expressions, in a Mystical Sense, was nevertheless understood and expected by the Jews, literally to be fulfilled by the Messiah; whom the Lord should anoint to preach glad Tidings to the meek: (Which made our Saviour bid the Disciples of John the Baptist, who were sent to ask him, whether he were the Christ or not, to tell their Master what they heard and saw, of the Blind being made to fee, and the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak, &c. wherein the Prophecies of the Messiah were literally fulfilled.) Moses also had said, that God would raise up and send them a Prophet like unto himself; which must give the Jews good Reason to expect from that Prophet, whom they looked for to come, the like or greater Works than Moses had wrought in the Days of their Forefathers. Therefore the People say, upon their seeing the Works of Jesus; When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than these which this Man hath

hath done? John 7. 31. From which, with feveral other Scriptures recited by him, our Author makes the very Observation I would defire; that is to fay, that "It was Effay, " foretold by the Prophets, and expected p. 70. " by the People of the Jews, that whenever "the Messiah came into the World, he should " work great and many Miracles. I wish our Author may himself remember this Observation; then we shall not hear henceforth, I hope, that many Miracles are no more an Evidence of a Divine Power than few, nor that all Miracles are alike: For how should the great Prophet that was expected, greater Pag. 66. much than any they had feen, be known and concluded to be that Prophet that should come into the World, but only from his working many and great Miracles; more, that is to fay, and greater than any Prophet they had feen fince Moses?

d

11

-

d

d

25

1

of

af

e-

1-

bc

ke

Ws

or

in

ore

ks

do

an

ath

This Observation will do well to be referved by our Author, for the Jews, against Pag. 75. his meeting them, but I fear he will do little good with it; if, when the Jew shall come to object to him that Scripture, Deut.

13. V.I. and say, That he ought not to acknowledge any one for a True Prophet, notwithstanding his Miracles, that shall contradict the Law of Moses; he give the Jew for Answer, That he mistakes the Sense of that Scripture; that what is there spoken, is only of a bold Guesser that shall pretend to fore-

tell

tell Things out of his own Head, and perhaps fomething of his faying may come to pass; but as to a Worker of a True Mi. racle, every fuch an one is to be believed, though his Doctrine should contradict that of Moses. He that would convince a Jew, and prevail for our Saviour's Miracles to have Credit with him, must, I dare say, not attempt to perswade him off from that Sense of this Scripture, in which his Nation always understood it; but go the way our Saviour himself did, to obtain his being believed by them for his Works fake: Who, besides the Miracles he wrought, not only press'd them with this, that Moses wrote of him; but likewise told them, that He came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them. When the Jew shall be convinced, that this was indeed the true Intent of our Saviour's Doctrine, effectually to introduce that Righteousness which the Law and the Prophets intended; then can the 7ew have no Exception against the Miracles of Jesus, but must admit them to be a Testimony of his being the Messiah, the great Prophet that was to come.

As to what this Author observes upon the (Second) Point, That our Lord Jesus actually wrought Miracles: In this as I agree with him, so he has my Thanks for his Observation, That this appears not only from the Testimony of his Followers and

Discin

d

e

1-

1,

ıŧ

v,

0

٧,

ıt

i-

y.

e-

es

at

10

f-

1;

af

m

ih,

011

us

I

for

nd nd

Cia

Disciples, but also from the Testimony of those who were neither; (but who reaped the Advantage of his great Works, as they were cured of their Sicknesses, Diseases, &c.) And even of his Enemies, who could not deny (though they were grieved and angry that he had fuch Power) but that they knew he exercised such Power: As the Priests and Pharisees, when in Council against him, they said, What do we? for this Man doth many Miracles. Their faying that he did his Works by the Power of the Devil, by the Affiftance of Belzebub, does prove the Matter of Fact, that Works of Wonder and Power were done by him; and is as good an Evidence of the fame, as any that his own Disciples have given. To which I have only this to add, That what the Jews say at this day, the Stories they have invented to make the World believe that the Miracles of Jesus were not wrought by the Power of God, do thus far serve us to prove against them, that the Blessed Jesus did the Things which the Evangelists, and other his Disciples and Followers have testifyed to us concerning him. I must fay, therefore, and acknowledge with our Author's Scholar, "That I know not how Effay, " any Matter of Fact can be better proved Pag. 73. "than this, that our Saviour wrought Mi-" racles.

But a wife Question follows this, and it receives as wife an Answer.

Pag 73.

"Would you have me believe ( fays the " Scholar ) and if called upon, maintain, "that every great Work our Saviour "wrought was properly Miraculous?" "I " fee no Reason ( says the Instructor ) to "Believe otherwise; but because we have " described a Miracle as a Work of God, " fubverting, changing, or fuspending the "known Course and settled Laws of Na-" ture, and appealing to the Senses; " and that some Works our Saviour wrought, " may not appear to us to come up fully to "this Description; it may be fit perhaps " not to maintain, that they were every one " of them properly Miraculous, though we " indeed believe they were. I can believe " that of Christ, which I cannot of ano-

" ther Man, &c.

As to the Question thus asked, if I am obliged in Charity not to think Evil of the Dialogue-Writer for framing it, and the Anfwer to it; I must nevertheless not omit to take notice, that the Question and Answer come in a very improper place: Is a Divine to observe, that it was prophesied of the Mesfiah that he should work Miracles, and that the Bleffed Jesus wrought so many and so great Works as proved him to be that great Person that should come, and that the matter of Fact; i. e. his having wrought fuch Works Works is undeniable, being Atteffed not only by the Disciples and Followers of Christ. but by Persons unconcerned with, and even by the Enemies of him and his Doctrine : And shall the same Person immediately make it a Question after this, Whether he is to Believe and Maintain of those great Works our Saviour wrought, that they were all properly Miraculous? Is not this to render questionable again, what might before have been thought to have been put out of ill doubt? Pray what does the Testimony of our Lord's Disciples and Followers; the Testimony of those who were Cured of heir Diseases; the Testimony of the Scribes nd Pharisees, who said, this Man doth ma-Miracles; what does all this fignify, if fter all it cannot be maintained, that these is great Works were Miraculous? But it vill be faid, the Question maketh not a oubt of all, but some only. Right; but he Question referreth to the great Works of ur Saviour; that is to fay, to some or ther of these Works which were taken and feemed, and testified to be Miraculous y our Lord's Disciples and Followers, and owned by the Jews: If understood only refer to the common Actions of our Safour's Life, it would be altogether Impernent; but if it refer to any what soever of lose great Works of Power which our Saour wrought, to shew that he was the Mes-

e

14

)-

10

nto

er

ne

ef-

nat

10

edt

at-

ich

rks

Messiah, and that God was with him; it does directly call in question all the Evidence we had before. For if the Disciples and Fol. lowers of our Lord, took any Works of his to be Evidences of a Divine Power with him, which were not really fuch, and which cannot be maintain'd fo to be; what becomes of the Testimony of such as had not their Senses about them to know a Miracle, but mistook it in many Cases? (In most Cases, for ought I see by this our Author's Account, whom we shall find to admit but a very small Number of Christ's Works to be properly Miraculous: Four Instances he gives us of that kind, and some fuch like, which reduces the many Miracles of our Saviour to a Number very small and inconsiderable.) An Insidel, I doubt, would be glad of this Advantage, to render their whole Testimony questionable, and fuch as cannot be relied on; for that they knew not how to distinguish a Miracle by their Senfes, (a Thing so easily distinguishable, according to this our Author, as for a Man to know a Cane from an Eel in in his hand;) and therefore can be little depended on for the Accounts they have gi ven us, even as to those Facts which upon their Relation might be thought by us to be properly Miraculous; but that their Mistake in so many Things, must leave some doubt whether they were proper and competen Tudge

Judges of Facts of this Nature. Nor will the Testimony of the Enemies of Christ stand us in much stead in this Case; for that they, it seems, took those Facts for Miracles, which a Christian cannot undertake to maintain to be so.

d

ld

li-

14-

id-

A's

In-

ome

cles

and

bt,

ren-

ble,

that

racle

Atio.

r, 25

el in

Little

ve gi-

upon

to be

stake

oubt

peten

udge

But do not I go too far? Our Author fays, "He sees no reason but to believe the "Works of our Saviour to be Miracles; "though they need not be maintained to be "such." Why (give me leave to say) should we believe those Works of our Saviour to be Miracles, which cannot be maintained to be such? I do not see, that any thing can be a Ground or Reason for us to believe them such, but what will afford us sufficient ground and reason to maintain them to be such. Any thing less, I am sure, must render our Faith precarious.

But this Author has given us a Reason, such as it it is, for what he says, viz. "Be"cause we have described a Miracle to be
"a Work of God, subverting, changing,
"or suspending the known Course and settled
"Laws of Nature; —and some of our
"Saviour's Works may not appear to us to
"come up fully to this Description, &c.
Very well! Because this Author has of his own Head pretended to give us a Desinition of a Miracle, and some of our Saviour's
Works may not appear to us to come up to that Description, &c. One would have

L 2 thought

thought the Forefight of this should have given our Author cause to think, that there would be a Mistake in this his Definition of a Miracle; or at least now finding our Saviour's Works not to come up many of them to it, this should have made him look back, and examine again the Definition he had given us of a Miracle; rather than fay any thing that might render questionable any part of the Testimony left us upon record in Scripture, concerning the Works of Christ; or infinuate a Thing which would indeed be a Reflection upon our Saviour himself, that he should do any of his great Works, and offer them to the World as Signs of a Divine Power affifting him; which themselves carried no such Evidence along with them. O! but our Author fays, "He can believe that of Christ, which he "cannot of another Man, although he fee "the same Effect produced; because the " same Effect may proceed from different " Powers and Causes; and because another "Man may do without a Miracle, what Christ " really did by Miracle." But might not an Unbeliever think, that the first Disciples and Followers of our Lord could believe as much in his Favour as this Author; and if fo, their Testimony amounts to no more than this, That Jesus Christ, as they believe, did that by Miracle, which another Man may do without a Miracle; and consequently

ly his Works are no Evidences of a Divine Power. This they cannot manifelt according to our Author's own way of Arguing, Pag. 6th, if any less than a Divine Power can work them; nor can they Attest to Jesus Christ's being sent of God, if they are such Essects as may proceed from different Powers and Causes; if another Man can do without a Divine Power, what I think Christ did by it. All these Works of Christ which I believe only, and think Christ might do by a Divine Power, but which I cannot maintain to be Miracles, because another Man might have done them without it, must go for nothing, because they prove nothing with Certainty, of God's Power being with him.

But some there are of our Saviour's Works, which this Author will insist upon to be truly Miracles; namely, "His turn-"ing Water into Wine; His Walking on "the Seas; His Feeding Five Thousand "People with five Loaves and two small "Fishes; and his raising up the Dead; and "some such like." But will these Four only, with some such like, be a Number sufficient to prove Jesus to be the Prophet spoken of, that should be like unto Moses; which, as this our Author owns, should especially appear in his working Miracles?

19

if

re

e,

in t-

ly

"For that he could be like him in no-Effay, "thing more, to the Honour and to the P.67. "Purpose of a Prophet?" The Jews Com-

L 3 putation

putation of the Miracles of Moses, (that is to fay, which were wrought by him, and on his account;) makes them upward of Seventy. I shall not examine the Exactness of their Account; let that be as it will; tis fure, Four and some others, are not a Number that can compare with Moses's. And that Saying of the common People among the Jews, When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than this man hath done? must go for little, if the greater part of the Works which Jesus did, and were thought to be Miracles by those who thus reasoned about him, were not really and truly fuch. Very little would be left us, if this were so, to prove, that this is He who was for to come; and the Jews have a great deal to fay for themselves, why they still look for another; for that there hath not as yet arose a Prophet fince in Ifrael like unto Moses; whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the Signs and the Wonders which the Lord fent him to do, and in all the mighty hand which Moses shewed in the fight of all Israel. How much more, if any of those Four which this Author has picked out to infift upon, should not appear to be more incontestable Proofs of a Divine Power, than others that he has given up, and yielded not to be fo. It is my Belief and Profession, That all the great and mighty Works of our Saviour's doing, are fuch as do plainly speak a Supernatural

natural and Divine Power; and (I think) they may, and ought to be maintained to be fuch. But, from our Author's Hypothefis, there might be found Occasion and Advantage, to disparage and contest some even of those Works, which he has picked out, and undertaken to infift upon as truly Miracles. The Water turned into Wine may be excepted against; because 'tis possible to bring Water to have the Taste of Wine, and to be so like it in all respects, that a nice and curious Palate shall scarcely distinguish it. This in reality, however, is no Objection against our Saviour's Miracle, when the Circumstances of his Fact are confidered; which will prove it not to be the Effect of Art or Skill, but a Work of Absolute Power, changing the Nature of the Water at once, and not in any natural or artificial Way by gradual Alteration. our Lord's Walking upon the Sea, might be contested, according to this Author's Argument upon the Case of Habakkuk's being conveyed through the Air by an Angel; which, he fays, he should not account to be a Miracle, because he knows not but the Power of the Angel might suffice for the doing it. Thus walking on the Sea, which is as possible as passing through the Air, (or rather more, this being a Fluid that will bear some Bodies of Weight, which the other will not;) would be no Mi-

r

MS

to

W

ch

n,

ole

nat

fo.

he

ir's

erral

Miracle if a Spirit should affift in it; be. cause the Power of a Spirit might suffice for it. And even according to the Opinion of these who saw our Lord walking upon the Sea, and thought it to be a Spirit, it might be, that a Spirit might help a Man fo to walk upon the Sea. Whence this Miracle would be contestable from the Sentiments of them that faw it, and attest it to us, if our Author's Supposition were good, That a Thing can be no Miracle, which we do not know but the Powers of an Angel (or Spirit) may be sufficient for. Nevertheless, this does not at all lessen the Work of our Saviour, nor hinder me from maintaining the same to be a Miracle, and so plain a Proof of a Divine Power affifting him, that no Man shall be able with Reafon to contest it. For I shall insist upon it, that 'tis a Work plainly above all Human Power, and confequently fuch as necessarily supposeth the Assistance of some other Power, and is therefore a Miracle, let that other Power invisible be what it will. The only doubt can be, Whether the Power affifting were that of God; the Proof of which will be made out otherways than from the Work it self: (as will be seen hereaster) but being once made out, will conclude this and all his other Works to be of God, Thus Two of the Miracles pitched upon to be maintain'd, tho' good in themselves, might be

a

t

t

be contested upon this Author's Principles. There are Two more, however, incontestable Proofs remain; and I allow them fo to be; and so likewise are the other; for that is incontestable, which cannot with Reason be contested or gainfayed: That cannot either of the other Two, nor indeed any of our Saviour's great and mighty Works, which are left us upon record as Works of Wonder and Power done by him; that is to say, any of those Signs which Jesus did in John 20. the presence of his Disciples, and which are written, that we might believe that Je-Sus is the Christ the Son of God. Otherwise the Two that remain good upon this Author's Principles, being no other in their kind, than what have been done by Prophets before; as by Elijah, in the Case of Kings the Widow's Cruise of Oyl, and Handful of and 18. Meal in a Barrel; upon which the Prophet, and She and her House did eat many days; and in the Case of her Son, whom he raised from the dead; And likewise by Elisha, 2 Kings when he multiplied the Widow's Oyl for the 4. v. 6, Payment of her Debts; and when he fatis- 32, 44. fied an Hundred Men with a few Loaves of Barley, fo that they eat and left; and in the raising of the Shunamite's Son; will hardly be fufficient to prove this to be the Prophet that should be raised up like unto Moses. Which must needs leave the unbelieving Jews a greater Advantage against Christianity,

14

ľ

y

g

ne ()

le

d,

ne

be

Iffay,

P. 74.

stianity, than I can in Charity think this

our Author designed to give them.

To prevent any fuch Advantage to the Adversaries of our Religion, I must therefore not only fay with this our Author's Scholar, That I allow these which he has mentioned of our Saviour's Miracles, to be Incontestable Proofs of a Divine Power; but further absolutely, that I cannot consent to part with any other of Christ's Miracles, though to me they may feem comparatively less. Nor I neither (fays this our Author.) What then have we had this Question and this Answer for? "Let us part (fays he) with " nothing but our Mistakes." This I like well, as I did his other Saying; but I hope we have had no Mistakes concerning our Saviour's Miracles. If we should have had any Mistakes concerning these, I fear lest we be forced to part with the Miracles alfo.

Matth. 8. v. 23. Yet this Author has something to propose that may convince us of a Mistake, and tis in one of our Lord's most stupendious Works, viz. His rebuking the Winds, when he was with his Disciples in a Ship on the Sea, in a Tempest.

In reference to this, our Author fays to his Scholar, "Were you ever at Sea, and "observed how suddenly the most Furious

"Winds have been laid, and how almost in an instant a Calm has succeeded to a great

" Storm?

" Storm ? The Scholar it feems had been at Sea, and made the Observation he desired, and agrees with him in it: And "what (fays "this Author) if some bold Passenger had " at that instant rebuked the Winds, and bid "them cease, and they had ceased immedi-"ately? Would you have concluded pre-" fently that fuch an Event was miraculous, " or would you have thought the Man had " fpoken audaciously and luckily?" Here truly the Scholar replies, " Audaciously and " luckily, fince the Winds might have then " ceased, though he had held his Tongue." But (replies our Author) "If you had feen "our Saviour Christ do the same Thing in "the fame manner, you would have con-"cluded He had exercised a Divine Power; " and yet the Event is alike in both Cases; "but you know how different Persons they "were?" Here this Author has shewn his Skill in writing Dialogues to the purpose; but so much of it, I doubt, as will shew him to have a greater share of Cunning than Integrity: One of the greatest of our Saviour's Miracles is here represented to be an Event that might have hapned by meer chance; by which the World is to be convinced of its great Mistake in apprehending, or at least insisting upon it as a Miracle. After this is done in a Fraudulent Dialogue, we have a Salvo that is to make all well again, only that our Author may fecure himfelf

(e

is

S,

as

in

to nd

in

eat

m?

felf a safe Retreat, if it should be proved against him, that our Saviour's Work was really miraculous, and if he should find himself too much pressed on the account of his Attempt to render it otherwise. He would have us therefore after all, believe it to be a Miracle in our Saviour, though it cannot be maintained to be such; there might be no Reason to conclude it to be a Miracle in another, but we do well to believe it such in him, as knowing what sort of Person he was. Thus the Miracle is left wholly percarious; we do well to believe it such, in reference to our Saviour's Person, but there is no Reason to believe it such from the Thing it self.

I shall not go about to cut off our Author from his Retreat, but allow him to go back by his Covered way: Nevertheless I am concerned to oppose him in the Step and bold Attempt he has made against our Saviour's Work; which I do not question but to prove miraculous in its Nature as well as in its Circumstances, such as must have been acknowledged a Miracle in any Man that had done it, and must in any one that shall do the like; not doubting but to shew also this Author's Observation to be false, or not to the Matter; and likewise, that the Case put by him upon it, is so different from that of our Saviour's, that no one that will pretend to put it as a Parallel Case, shall be able o clear himself from the suspicion of a

vilful Misrepresentation.

d

2

t

e

in in

1S,

IS;

ce

no

it

hot

ick

on-

old

ir's

to in

een

hat

hall

alfo

not

Case

that

pre-

able

10

And the first thing that I shall for this urpose consider, is our Author's Observatin, and his way of bringing it in --- "Were ou ever at Sea, &c. This is to infinuate, hat what might first lead into the Mistake f this being thought a Miracle, might be he Ignorance of the Persons present at, and Vitnesses of it: These, 'tis likely, were neer at Sea, and so were incompetent Judges f the Miracle, as being Strangers to the hings that Mariners observe to happen fually at Sea. But this Infinuation shall be o prejudice in our Lord's Case; for those ho were with him in the Ship, were his isciples; several of these, as Peter, James, nd Andrew, and John, were Sea-faring Men, they were Fishers by their Calling, accuomed to, and experienced in Sea Affairs, nd the Dangers of the Sea): These thereore as they must be supposed Competent udges of the Jeopardy and Danger the Ship as in, so must they be supposed as skilful making Observations of the Winds and leather at Sea, and of what Alterations appen therein, and thereby, as our Author, Yet these seeing what our r his Scholar. aviour did, marvelled, faying, What maner of man is this? They feared exceedingly lays another Evangelist: ) And another, hese being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, another, What mannner of man is this? Yet it seems this Author was not afraid to bring his Observation against their Testimony and Experience, and against the Miracle that made them to fear the Divine Power that wrought it. But that we may fpeak with more certainty to the Case, let us consider the Fact, and the Circumstances thereof, and put together the feveral, but well agreeing Relations that we have of it. All the Relations agree that the Persons in the Ship with Jesus, were his Disciples; (competent Judges, as I have before observed, as of the Jeopardy that they were in, so likewise of the Wind, and Weather, and Accidents at Sea. ) And as for the Description of the Case and its Circumstances, There arose a great Tempest in the Sea (faith St. Matthew) σεισμός μέγας it is in the Greek, a great Commotion and Rage in the Sea there was, infomuch that the Ship was covered by the Waves What occasioned this Commotion, he says not, but Winds there were, and these we may therefore suppose were probably the Caule of the Rage the Sea was in. St. Mark fays There arose a great Storm of Wind, and the Waves beat into the Ship, fo that it was non full of Water. St. Luke fays the fame; Then came down a Storm of Wind, and they were fil led with Water, and were in jeopardy: Ou Lord is all the while afleep, and in the Ex tremity of the Danger awakened (which

Matt. 8.

Mark 4. 37-

Luke 8.

23.

t

t

h

er

e-

he

üp

ent

he

of

at

the

e a

ew)

om-

nso-

rves:

fays

may

ause

fays

d the

S nou

There

re fil

Ou

e Ex

which Cir Circumstance shews it impossible for him to have made any observation by looking out after the Wind and Weather;) and as he arises thus awakened, he asks his Disciples Where was their Faith? Why did they doubt, and were fearful? (Which Circumstance, as it shews him not to have had any Concern upon his being told of their immediate Danger; fuch an Unconcernedness as could not be thought to be in any Man but him who knew his own Power; fo it also shews that before there was any possibility of making any Observations as to the Danger they were in, or likelihood of the Storm's going over, he told them in effect what he would do): Being arose, he rebukes the Winds and the Sea, and there was a Calm (fays St. Matthew). He rebuked the Wind, and faid unto the Sea, Peace, be still, and the Wind ceased, and there was a great Calm (fays St. Mark,) referring, as I conceive, to the stilness of the Sea, as well as of the Wind. (St. Luke says) He rebuked the Wind, and the raging of the Water, and they i. e. both ceased, and there was a Calm. Hereupon they who had feen this Work of his, marvell and fear exceedingly; and being afraid, wonder, and fay one to another, What manner of Man is this, that he commandeth even the Winds and Water, that even the Winds and the Sea obey him? The Fact was therefore, 'tis plain, not only the rebuking the Winds, but the Sea also,

and the Event was, that the raging of the Waters, as well as the Wind, eeafed; both ceased, and there was a Calm. Now as for this Author's Observation at Sea, "that the "most Furious Winds are fuddenly laid. " and almost in an instant a Calm succeeds " to a very great Storm; one would think by the ready affent which his Scholar gives to it, it were such as must be affented to by every body; and yet if the Calm he speaks of be understood to refer to the Calm which followed upon what our Saviour did, that is to fay, a Calm of both Wind and Sea, it is notoriously false. And whatever Truth there may be in it, if understood only as to the sudden ceasing of the Wind, yet will it appear that no Conclusion can with Reafon be made from it, that there might be any thing of Chance in our Saviour's Cafe. For (First) this is certain, as to Winds at Sea, they are of different kinds, and blow after a different manner; there are fudden Flaws of Wind, which sometimes endanger a Vessel, and perhaps overfet it, which come unexpected, and the Blowing and Danger of which is prefently over: And again, in uncertain Weather, there are often fierce Winds that come up with Clouds, which blow furiously, until the Cloud is passed over; of the ceasing of which Winds, Sailors perhaps may give fome guess. There are strong blowing Winds, that blow without

co

o

at Na

n

C

Ch

out intermission, or with very little interda mission, during the time of their continual ance, which generally cease and go off by degrees : And in Tempestuous Weather there! are furious Storms of Wind that blow with a terrible fury, but yet with frequent Intermissions; and in these Intermissions perhaps the Wind is scarcely felt, and yet the Blasts by and by return as fierce as ever, but generally the Blasts are weaker and weaker before they give over. In this difference of Winds and their Blowing, there cannot from any General Observation whatever be much concluded for or against any particular Case. But those of necessity must be allowed to be the best Judges of any Matter extraordinary in the blowing or ceasing of the Wind, who are present at the time, especially if any thing experienced in Accidents hapning at Sea, as these Persons here were, who herefore must be allowed to be the most competent Judges of what they faw. And (Secondly) as it must not be pretended thereore that any thing can be concluded abfor utely, as to all Cases, from the uncertainty of the Winds blowing; so if any thing could e concluded with any certainty, it would ather be, that no such Thing as this of a Man's rebuking the Winds, and their ceasing nmediately, could happen by Chance of ecident: For that ever there was such a hance in the World, is more, I believe, than

f

Gof

1-

ce

ed

ai-

ere

th-

this Author, or any one else will pretend to fay. And even the uncertainty of the Wind it felf, is so far an Argument against the probability of fuch a Chance, that the odds against such a Chance is more than a thoufand to one. So that if I may not be allow. ed to fay fuch a Chance is impossible, it's certainly the most improbable thing in nature. It is not therefore in Reason to be allowed that this Author should put a Case which never was, and which it may be prefumed (from the great improbability of the Events following in the way of Chance) never will be attempted; and this barely upon the possibility that such a Thing might happen; which I will adventure to fay never did happen as yet. And if our Saviour's Miracle stands good until such a Thing does happen in Fact, a Man might almost adventure then to give it up. But (Thirdly) from a bare Possibility of Chance, in respect of the Wind's uncertainty, some doubt might be, whether the Rebuke of the Winds, and their ceasing, might be a Miracle in ever Cafe; yet could there be no doubt in Rea fon as to our Saviour's Cafe, the Circum stances of his doing it considered; that to fay, those that were Seamen in the Shi then believing themselves in the utmost Pe ril, and not observing the least likelihood the Storms abating; the Ship full of Water and ready to fink that Minute; him after

C

0

b

te

W

C

c

Se

1s

1-

1-

rehe

ne-

upght

Ver Mi-

does

ven-

y) i

**spea** 

night

and

ever

Rea

rcum

that

e Shi

oft Pe

ood

Water

until the Extremity of the Danger, and awakened in that instant, and immediately, in effect, as good as telling what he would do (faying, Why are ye fearful, Q ye of litthe Faith, to his Disciples that cried out Mafter, Mafter we perish ) , and then instantly rebuking the Winds, when as he had not a Minute's time to make any Observation of either the Wind or Weather, and doing this in the Extremity of Danger (fuch as must reasonably be thought to put any Man into too great a Concern for himself and his Life, ever once to think of, much less to venture on such an Audacious Attempt as the rebuking of the Winds, if he were conscious to himself, as every Man in the World must be, that he had no Power to controul them.) These Circumstances of the Action, and the Event, confidered as coming instantly to pass, do plainly argue that the ceasing of the Wind could not be Chance or Accident, but the Effect of his Powerful Commanding Word, ought not in Reason to be accounted any other: And indeed if Circumstances were not Reasonable Ground to infer from what Causes Effects we see proceed, there could be little certainty in our reasoning from one to the other: Not to meddle, however, with Instances out of our way: If the Circumstances of a Fast in the Case of Miracles, were to fignifie nothing, I shall not aflee ley that many of our Saviour's Works unt would M 2

would be no Miracles; (for that is what is in dispute): But many of Moles's, and other of the Lord's Prophets, which in Scripture are related as Miraculous Works, must no more be so accounted. Thus Elijah's calling for Fire from Heaven would be none. because Lightning often happens, and possibly might happen when a Man might call for it. The Rain not falling for the space of Three Years and Six Months, and its raining at the end of that Term, might have so happened, whether the Prophet had prayed or no. Thus the Hail, Rain and Thunder might have hapned in Ægypt, had Mofes never stretched forth his hand towards Heaven for it; and the same might have ceased when he was gone out of the City, though he had not spread abroad his hands unto the Lord: Yet Moses makes use of this Instance as an Argument to Pharaoh, that he should know by it bow that the Earth is And the Frogs which Moses the Lord's. brought up out of the Rivers of Ægypt, by firetching forth his Hand with his Rod over the Streams, and over the Rivers, and over the Ponds (which in this our Author's Oplnion was an undoubted Miracle) might, as many as were in the Rivers, and Ponds, and Lakes, have come up upon the Land of themfelves, as fometimes Frogs are known to do, and might likewise have so gone away again; and yet Moses tells Pharaoh, that by his de-Aroying

tow

85

20

he

fay

and

a A

the

vio

racl

and

nor

iste

it to

Exod. 9. V. 29.

Exod. 8.

flroying the Frogs from him and his Houfeel that they might remain in the River only at the time he should appoint him to do it; he should know that there was none like unto the Lord God of Ifrael. Doubtless as Frogs are frequently in Lakes and Ponds, and fometimes come up upon the Land; it was their coming up so abundantly out of the Rivers, and their coming and going away at the word of Mofes; that is to fay, the Circumstances of the Case, that proved it to be a Miraculous Work : ( For this Author, I Effay, dare fay, will find but few Men in the World Pag. 16besides himself of this Opinion, that 'tis as easy to bring up a Million of Frogs out of a River, as Four and Twenty.) So likewife the Hail; Rain and Thunder in Ægypt, notwithflanding fuch Things usually happen in the Course of Nature, were miraculous, as coming at the Word of Moses, and ceasing according to his Word, at the time which he bid Pharach nominate for it; that is to lay, from the Circumstances of their coming and ceafing, we must in reason account this a Miracle and may not therefore account the reasing of the Wind instantly upon our Saviour's rebuking it, any thing less than a Miracle: For that this blowing where it lifteth, and no Man knowing whence it cometh, for whither it goeth, and also ceasing as it isteth, and no Man knowing what maketh to cease, nor when it will cease, 'tis not M 3 to

at

15

les

by

er

ver

pl-

as

and

m-

do,

ain;

de-

ring

at any Man's Word commanding it, unless that Man had some extraordinary Power to easile it so to do a much less when there are further Circumstances, such as those before mentioned in this Case, to pup it beyond all probability of Chance or Accident mittende

And besides all this; if our Author's Ob fervation be understood to refer to the Calif of the Sea, ast well as anothe Windard to which if he be not willing it thousand heren tended, tis plain that it's nothing to our faviour's Cafe, whose Action was the Rebi king the Winds and the Sea also, and the Event that followed, the Ceafing of the Raging of the Waters, as well as of the Blowing of the Wind) that a Turbulent Boilterous Ruging Sea has immediately subsided, and became Still almost in the Instant that a Furious Wind has intermitted or ceased to blow, I dan adventure to fay fuch a Thing was never known, nor is it possible in Nature? I shall therefore fay, that as in this Action of our Saviour's, the Fact was, his rebuking not only the Winds, but the Sea alfo; and the Event, that the Waters as well as the Wind ceased: This was an Event where Chance could have no room. The Raging Fluctu ation of the Waters immediately ceasing at the fame inflant with the Wind, was in felf a Thing preternatural; the Rage of those in the way of Nature always ceasing æ

to

re

re

all

bi

Hi

to

CKE

Sas

lah

ent

oi

the

ing

ime

Find

are

ever

hall

our

not

the

Vind

ance

g at

ini

e of

aling

by

by degrees; for which there is a necessary Reason in Nature from the Rules of Motion; every Thing mov'd by Violence, moving more fwiftly or flowly according to the Force or Strength impressed upon it, and every fuch Motion ceasing by degrees, not instantly, but continuing on proportionably to the greater or leffer Force of the Impreffion given it, till the Strength thereof is fbent and worn away. This is visibly and fensibly perceived in the Motion of a Solid Body, and much more in a Fluid, as in the Fluctuation of the Waters of the Sea, which when agitated, driven and forced by Violent Winds, run together to an extraordinary heighth, and when worked up into a Swell and Rage, never fall and subside at once, but as their Motion abateth, and that by flow degrees (fo flow, that I have fometimes known in some Hours the Surface of the Waters has not been smooth as in a Calm; as I have likewise known the Wayes to run high, and the Waters of the Sea to rage at other times, when no Wind has blown at all to put it into a Commotion.) In the present Case therefore, where there was so violent a Commotion of the Waters, that the Ship was covered with the Waves, it was easie to be seen whether the Sea, as well as the Wind were obedient to his Commanding Word: And therefore as we find in the Account given us of the Action, that both M 4

the Wind and the Sea obeyed bim; there can be no Dispute, but as the Work was above all Human Power, fo there could be no Chance or Accident in it, it being indeed what could not come to pass in the way of Nature: Therefore I may put it to this our Author, that this great Work of our Saviour's was a Miracle even in his own description of a Miracle; there was a Changing of the known Course of Nature, and the Alteration visible and apparent to the Senses and Reason of them that saw the Thing, that perceived both the Wind and the Sea to obey bim. And 'tis plain to us in the Relation left us of it, that the Spectators accounted it nothing less; for they not only marvelled and wondered (the Scripture tells us); i.e. thought it strange and miraculous, but feared exceedingly (which Fear could not be now for the Danger that was over; at least the remains of that Fear could not have been so exceeding great); which probably therefore was a Fear in reference to the Greatness and Prefence of the Power which they had feen do fuch a Work as this: They likewise reasoned with themselves ('tis said) saying one to another, What manner of Man is this? So that 'tis evident they hence conceived him to be not an Ordinary Man, but some Great One, One that had the Power of God with him.

die Adlera ther both

a

n

h

I need not now fay any thing more to the Cafe which this Author has put of a Bold Passenger's rebuking the Wind; for that 'tis plain 'tis no way parallel with that which it refers to: It has not only left out all the Circumstances of the Fact, but the greatest and chiefest Thing in the Action it felf. The Case is put, as referring only to the Rebuking the Winds, and the Event confidered likewife only in reference to that; not the least notice taken of our Saviour's commanding the Waters at the same time, nor of the Event as to that; which made appear that the Waters and the Sea, as well as the Wind, obeyed him; which Things could not be suppofed to have come to pass either accidentally, nor even naturally together, at the same instant.

f

eyft

it

nd

ht

dhe

ns

d-

as

redo

on-

to

So

im

reat

vith

reed

It is but a poor amends this Author makes for his disingenuous dealing, by his saying, That he would have us conclude however, that Christ exercised a Divine Power in this Action, for his Person's sake, and what we know concerning the difference between him and another Man; when as he intimates that we ought not to conclude so of another Man doing the same Thing in the same manner, though the Event were in all respects alike. As it has been shewn him (I hope to his Conviction, as well as Shame) that this Work of our Saviour's was in it self not a Precarious, but an Incontestible Proof of a Divine

Divine Power, and may be maintained fo to be, not only from the Circumstances, but from the Fact it felf, and was evidently taken fo to be by them that faw it; fo he must be content to hear likewise, that from the Relation we have of the Matter, it appears the Spectators of this Action had Thoughts quite different from him of this Work: Thefe. ris plain, did not think any thing the better of the Work, nor any otherways of it, for the fake of him that did it, nor on account of any knowledge or good Opinion that they had before of his Person; but rather directly the contrary : From the Fall they reason concerning the Person, saying, What manner of Man is this? And from the Nature as well as Circumstances of the Fact, they come to know how different a Person he was from other Men; for their Question implies their Thoughts concerning him; that inafmuch as they had feen him do what no Man ever did, and what they could not think it possible for Man to do, He must be something more than Man, who had shewn a Power that could command the Winds and Sea.

And this shall suffice here to shew that the great Works of Christ are not Precarious Proofs, but Proofs beyond all just Exception, of a Divine Power: And this I make no doubt may be maintained (the Nature and the Circumstances of the Actions considered)

ed) as to all those Acts of Wonder and Power which Christ wrought for Signs in the presence of his Disciples and Followers, and which are written of him, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ. John 20.

e,

C-

n 2-

ıA

he

a,

on

lti-

m; do

uld

ult

nad

inds

the

ous

pti-

e no

and

der-

ed)

I now come with this Author to the (Third) Thing he intended to shew, namely, The End and Purpose for which Christ faid himfelf, that he wrought Miracles, And that the End for which Christ wrought Miracles was this, " That he might be believed Effay, fro come from God, and that what he should Pag. 76. "deliver as God's Will, was certainly fo," I agree. But as for what this Author fays is at the bottom of this, tis more than I know, or than he has yet proved: He and I have gone upon different Bottoms hitherto; and in this I shall not go upon the same with him, yet think I am upon a fure Bottom too: And tis this, That the Man who shall by Miracles prove that the Power of God is with him, ought to be believed, and his Doctrine received for that where God is, there is Truth, and God is doubtless with him who shall give us Demonstrations of his Power. But this Author will be apt to fay, perhaps, If a Miracle be not a Work which none can do except God be with him, how can a Man prove by Miracles that he has the Power of God? I take my felf to have already cut, him off from this Reply: A Miracle indeed must be a Work above Human Power, that no Man

Man can do, unless some Invisible Power be with him, or elfe it could no ways prove a Power like to that of God: But as Opposite Powers have been known to affift Men to do Works of this kind, to find which is of God. I must find which is Superior; the Power of God I know to be infinite, that must be above all other Powers, that must be unlimited and uncontrouled: Where therefore a Man shall give Evidence by Miracle or Miracles that the Power of God is with him; that is to fay, can shew me a certain Sign that he acteth by a Power Supernatural, unlimited, uncontrouled, superior to all others, I conclude that God is with him, and that he is for that Reason to be believed in what he delivereth as his Will; for 'tis not tobe believed that God will give on entrust His Power with one that shall deceive. And I do suppose the Power of Christ will appear to be the Spirit and Power of God from his Works (referving always the further Light and Evidence, which the Tendency of his Doctrine, and of his Works, and which the Prophecies that were before of him and his Power may give us in the Matter; ) which if taken together, very plainly shew the Power by which he acted, to be not only above Nature, but also in it self unlimited and uncontrouled; that is indeed no less nor other Power than that of God.

Work above Hueran to the still

n

n

ti

ir

V

t

The Miracles of Christ, therefore, I agree, " were wrought to testify he came Essay, "from God; and that the World might be- P. 77. "lieve what he delivered from him; or "that God had fent him, which is the fame "thing in effect." And that Christ himself appeals to his doing the Works that the Fa- John s. ther gave him to finish, to the Works that 36. he did in his Father's Name; to his doing -10. 24. the Works of the Father; as the Evidence -- 25.38. and Witness that God the Father sent him : that he was the Christ; that he should be believed, and that it should be known thereby that the Father was in him. And he likewise says, that had he not done those John 15. his Works, the Jews might have had some excuse for their Insidelity. And I likewise farther assent, that the principal Use of Miracles may be observed, from the Use which our Saviour made of one of his great Works of Power in a particular Case; namely, the Cure he wrought on the Para- Mark 2. lytick; that is to fay, the Argument that he v. 3. used to the Jews, That he being about in a Work which he was going to do before their Eyes, to shew a Power Divine; ought reasonably to be believed in what he had intimated, of his having a Power from God also to forgive Sins. That is as much as to fay, inasmuch as he had shewn them by his Works that he was of God, it was reason they should believe him, in that which he intend-

L ıt

is

I

ar

iš

ht

nis

he

ais

ch

he

aly

ed

101

he

intended by the Expression he let fall purpo. fedly, to give them an intimation thereof. and now would plainly tell them, and convince them of by this Work which he was about to do by the Power of God; That he who fent him, had indeed given and fent him with a Commission and Power of pardoning Sins. So that from Christ's Appeal to the Miracle he wrought in this particular Case, as well as from his Appeal in general to his Works that he did in his Father's uame; I agree, that he requires to be, and infifts that he ought to be believed for his Works fake. But all this, I think, may imply too this Supposition; That as concerning his Works, he had made it manifest that they were wrought in God. This I take to be meant and implied in his faying, If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works.

John 10. v. 37.

Esfay, Pag. 82. John 20. V. 31. I agree it to be for this Reason, as St. John tells us, That the Signs which Jessus did in the presence of his Disciples, were written and recorded, that we might thence believe him to be the Christ: And that St. Peter well argued against the Jews, That Jesus of Nazareth was a Man approved of God, by the Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him; as they themselves well knew. Nor is it in the least to be questioned, but that God intended to give

A&s 2.

give Credit to the Doctrine of the Apostles of Christ, by the Miracles he enabled them to work; as he wrought with them, con-Mark 16. firming the word with Signs following; as the v. 20. Lord gave testimony unto the word of his Acts 14.3. grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands; as God was pleased to bear them witness, both with Signs and Heb. 2.4. Wonders, and with divers Miracles and

Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

1-

to

do

t;

e-

25

70-

es,

ght

Ind

ws,

ved

ers,

hey

ealt

d to

But now having gladly concurred with our Author in his Observations thus far, I must here take notice of a Thing that should not be passed over, by any one that would render the Works of Jesus an undeniable Proof of his being the Christ, and remove all Exceptions that may lie against this Evidence: And that is the Appeal, and the Truth of that Appeal, which our Lord himself made to the Scriptures, as testifying and bearing witness to his Person, and his Works; to the Nature also and Kind of his Works, as evidencing by what Power they were done; to the Drift likewise, and main Tendency of his Doctrine; as well to thew whence this Power was, as to convince that his Gospel ought to be received upon the account of its Concurrence with the former Revelation, which was already understood to be of God.

This Appeal of our Lord's to the Scriptures, as testifying and bearing witness to

his

his Person and his Works, is most plain; John 5. v. 39. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. And v. 46. Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. Observe there the Bent of Christ's Discourse— To clear that he was the Messiah, he produceth the witness of John the Baptist, v. 33. Te Sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the Truth: His own Works; v. 36. I have a greater witness than that of John; the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the Same Works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath fent me. The Voice from Heaven; v. 37. And the Father himself which bath sent me, bath born witness of me; (whose Voice and Appearance they had not at any time regarded.) But he concludes in Scripture, and appeals to the former Revelation as the most undeniable Testimony; saying, Search the Scriptures, they are they which testify of me. And again, Moses wrote of me; had ye believed him, ye would have believed me. Thus again, from the Nature and Kind of his Works, he argueth, and taketh off the Pharifees Objection, that they were done by the Power of the Devil; faying, If Satan cast out Satan, how can his Kingdom stand? Matth. 12. v. 26. The Sense and Strength of which Argument is this; That his casting out Devils, W23

ul

in

du ni.

H

was a certain Sign that the Works he did. were by the Power of God, and not by any Power of the Devil; for the Devil could not be thought to act, and (to be fure) would not against himself. And thus the Inference he turther makes, is beyond exception; That if he cast out Devils, and did his other Works by the Spirit and Power of God, then the Kingdom of God was come unto them; then it was clear that he was the Meffrah who was come amongst them, whose Mission God had testified by the Power he had given him to do those Things; which Power he should not have had from God, had he not been his Christ. And again, what other Meaning could our Saviour have in that Saying of his - Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Mat. 5. 17. Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulil them? but to take away all fuch Exception, as the Jews might have against the eceiving of his Doctrine, as they were the Disciples of Moses, and knew that God spake mto him; and even to oblige them to reeive it upon this account, that it was not opposite to, nor destructive of the Law or he Prophets; but fought in the main the ulfilling that Righteousness which the Law nd the Prophets intended? Thus we find our Saviour also, even aster his Resurrectin, appealing to the Writings of Moses, and If the other Prophets; when he expounded to

e

e

s,

1,

Vê.

m

r-

ti-

he

ow

26.

gu-

119, V23

to his Disciples the things concerning himself, Luke 24. 27. And thus we find also the Apostles of our Lord, to prove his being the Christ, and to establish their Doctrine which was the same with his; though the Power of God was with them, to give Testimony to the Word of his Grace; arguing with the Jews nevertheless, from the Scriptures, from the Testimony of Moses, and the Prophets. Thus St. Paul, Acts 17. 2. reasoned with the Jews out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, &c. that this Jesus whom he preached, was Christ. And Acts 18. 28. of Apollos, a Man mighty in the Scriptures, it is faid, that he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was Christ. And, as to the Effect of this Appeal to the Scriptures, it is shewn us in the Instance of the Beræans, Acts 17. v. 11, 12. that these Searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so; and therefore many of them believed. Furthermore, St. Paul, Acts 26. v. 22. after the Relation he had made to King Agrippa of his Miraculous Conversion, infifts upon this as the chief Thing after all that he had said none other things, than those which Moses and the Prophets did say should come. And Acts 28. 23. to the Jews a Rome, whilst he was Prisoner there, ('ti faid) he expounded, and testified the King dom of God; perswading them concerning Fesus

(

t

n

ti

be

W

fil

re

W

fe

Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the Prophets. And Rom. 16. 28. he says, his Gospel and Preaching of Christ, was made manifest by the Scriptures of the Prophets. And 2 Peter Now. 17, 18. the Word of Prophety is insisted on, as a more sure Word than the Voice from Heaven; and consequently, as an Evidence and Testimology, greater and more sure than that of Mix Nacles. And self-out and more sure than that of Mix Nacles.

i-

is

ld

in

ly

W-

ist.

he

of

ese

bose

hem

26.

e to

ion

all

hose

bould

vs a

('ti

King

rnin

Fesus

oldAs it is most plain, therefore, that God purposed to give his Son Jefus, and his Apo-Hes Credit with those to whom they were fent, by giving them the Power of Mirades; so it is no less evident, that Christ and his Apostles, on account of the Revelation that had been before, appeal to that Revelation as tellifying of the Spirit and Powwhich God had given now to them, by the Prophecies that had been before of the Things that were to come to pass; as confirming, that the Power with them was of God; Moses and the Prophets having spoken thereof. They prove by this also, that the Works they did were by his Power; for that the Doctrine which they would have believed upon the Evidence of those Works, was fuch as tended principally to the fulfilling the Law and the Prophets; herein removing that Objection and Prejudice, which fluck most with the Jews, who professed themselves Moses's Disciples; shewing the Righteoughes of the Law might be fulfilled. And as the Issue was, that many believed, when they faw the Miracles which Jesus and the Apostles did, so there was the same Issue from the Appeal to the Scriptures, upon searching of which many also believed. These were Proofs that were both convincing; and as they were offered to gether by Christ and his Apostles, they may not be separated, the one having a visible and necessary dependance upon the other up

I must provide here, that I may not be understood to think, but that the Works of Christ were of themselves a sufficient Proof that he was a Teacher come from God, and that no Man could do those Miracles which he did except God was with him; But when I think this, it is in reference to the Greatness and Number of his Works on the one hand, and the Nature of some of his Works on the other st that is to fay, these done by him in opposition to the Devil and his Power; as the one of these shew not only that he could not act by the Rawer of the Devil, but likewise that his Power was superior to that of Devils, and as his great and many mighty Works also are an incontestible Proof of his acting by a Power Infinite, Unlimited, and Uncontrouled. Nevertheless, as to those who had received a former Revelation, the Prophecies of him and BIII

h

ti

n

he

01

CE

m

fo

lat

all

and of his Works, and of the Things that came to pals, were the fare Testimony from which they might conclude his Works to be of God; and this having removed all doubts concerning the Power with him, those Works that he wrought must be an allowed Witness to the Person and his Doctrine: And when the Appeal was carried yet further, that the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled in the Righteoufness of the Gospel, there could no just Exceptions remain, but those were left without excuse, who rejected the Counsel of God against themselves. And as to those who before had not received, but may yet have heard of a former Revelation, it must be a great Confirmation to them in their belief of Christ and of his Truth, for the fake of his Works; that a former Revelation, which was established upon the like Works of Wonder and Power, hath testified of this, and giveth a Witness to it, not only by its Prophecies of the arising of such a Prophet, but in the Command it hath given for this Prophet to be heard: And that what the Latter Revelation hath shewn to be the Will of God concerning us, is no other than what the Former chiefly intended; which because the former was too weak to bring to pass, the latter hath in God's time been made effectually to fulfill and accomplish.

e

e

of

10

9

of of

у,

e+

W

er

115

an

wed.

red

im

ind

And

And now I am ready to go forward with our Author, who has appointed his Scholar to put it to him to account for the Jewish Infidelity, under the manifestation of so much Power as Christ exercised, and notwithstanding so many Miracles wrought amongst them. And a great many Reasons (he fays) might be affigned, though none fufficient; but that which feems to him the strongest, and most to the Purpose in hand, was this, - "That the Pharisees and Lead-"ing Men among the Jews, had spread it " abroad among the Common People, that " he dispossessed Demoniacs by Beelzebub the "Prince of the Devils. This indeed they did give out, and this might be one Cause; but I think that a greater which our Saviour assigned, They hated the Light, because their Deeds were evil; they were of their Father the Devil, and the Lusts of their Father they would do: This other was rather their Pretence, and no sufficient Pretence neither, there being no want of Conviction of the contrary. There was great Reasoning among them, that Christ's Works were not the Works of one that had a Devil: Can the Devil (fay they) open the Eyes of the Blind ? 'Twas the apprehension of many of the People, that the great Works of Jesus were too mighty for the Devil's Power. But whether this Reasoning of the People was

good or not (as most probably it might hold

good,

Effay, p. 85.

> John 10. v. 21.

good, taking and confidering the Works of Christ together; ) our Saviour, however, had faid enough himself to take away this Objection which the Pharifees made, when he argued with them, Matth. 12. 22. That Satan would not cast out Satan: So that tho' the Miracles which Jesus wrought would turn upon himself, if there had been reason to believe them wrought by the Devil; yet as there was no manner of Reason to think them wrought by his Power, but the contrary, (his Acting in opposition to the Devil, and casting him out of those he had possessed, being a convincing Proof that what he did was by the Spirit and Power of God) this fet aside their Objection, and proved that which our Lord pressed upon them in the Case, viz. That the Kingdom of Godwas come unto them : So that their continuing after this Conviction to impute the Works he wrought, to the Devil's Power, was the greatest of Sins. " But (fays our Author) to be- Essay, "lieve the Devil could do fuch Works, was p. 87. "the first Snare they fell into, and would " eafily throw them into the other; and "the People could never have been induced " to believe that Jesus wrought great Works "by the affistance of the Devil, unless they " had been first taught that the Devil could "work great Works himself, and also com-"municate such his Power to Men: This "was the Fundamental Error, &c. If fo, why should not our Saviour then have taken

N 4

ır

a-

er

ce

nc

1-

re

an

he

of

*s* 

But

vas

old

od,

no.

Matt. 12 y. 25.

notice of this himself, and dispossessed them of that Fundamental Error, and diffipated this Prejudice of the Jews ? Could he that was the Wisdom of God, and knew the Thoughts of these Men, that they first had within themselves when they were thus reasoning in their Minds against him, before they spake openly, be ignorant of the Error that missed them ? Or would not he have discovered this Fundamental and Gross Mistake to the Pepale at least, if not to them that made the Objection against him? Doubtless he would have discover'd their Fundamental Error, and argued them out of it, so to have put away all Exceptions against himself and his Miracles at once, and prevented the falling of any into so great a Sin as that of Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, by one such Consutation? But instead of this our Lord gives an Answer that turns upon a quite contrary Suppolition; it is an Answer indeed most convincing that his Works were not of the Devil; but it leaves, yearather tacitly confirms the Thoughts they had of the Devil's Power being very great, and also of his communicating his Power unto Men: It leaves them in the fame Ideas they had concerning the Power and Operations of the Devil, but proves the Works of Christ to be from another, and this a Superior Power. fore I am surprized to see this Author go so far out of his way to fetch in that by head and shoulders, with a Question that his Delign On

t

ŧ

t

t

I

t

f

a (

I

G

d

e d

1-

e

r

e

it

le

-

it .

of

ny

a-1

an

p-

nle-

ns w-

IU-

res ng

out 10-

re-

10

by

his

gn

Design had little to do with; which is in its felf as great an Argument as any Man would or need defire against his Hypothefis: Observe the Answer, Matth. 12. v. 25. "E-"very Kingdom divided against it self is "brought to Desolation; and every City or " House divided against it self, shall not stand. " And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided " against himself, How shall then his Kingdom " fland?" This Answer hitherto does not in the least deny what they had in their Thoughts of the Devil's Power to do great Things, but removes the Objection from himself and his Works, as being contrary to Satan, wrought in opposition to him, to turn him out of those he had possessed. After this he has another Argument, viz. "If I " by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do "your Children cast them out? therefore they sball be your Judges." On these Words Interpreters have put different Senses, but whatever Sense can be understood, will leave them to the same Thoughts they had of the Devil's Power. Some suppose the Question to imply, that their Children could not do any Such Thing; and our Saviour as intending to lay, If the Devil would affift in fuch a Cafe, and act against himself, why are not your Children (who are great enough with the Devil to have his Affistance) able to do, it? Others think there were Exorcists among the Jews, who by the Name of the most High God did sometimes do Things of this nature; and

9

h

r

4

V

b

a

h

h

h

tl

ei

er

01

66

"

kr

fic

H

ag

D

re

pe

th

for

and fo our Saviour's Question is to be understood thus; Why may not I cast out Devils by the Name and Power of God, as well as your Children and Disciples (who being evil and wicked, are more to be fuspected of having correspondence with Satan's Kingdom) do, or pretend to do? When they in the Name of God go about to do it, they affirm it to be by the Power of God, and so do I; and you allow it in them to be fo, why should you not think of me as you do of your own? The Answerunderstood either way, owns the Supposition: The first plainly, that the Devil might, but would not affift to fuch a Work. The Second tacitly, whilft it's urged that they ought not to think other and worse of him than they did of their own Disciples, who were more to be suspected of a Correspondence of this nature, being wicked Persons. 'Twas a much like Argument of our Lord's, when he said, Which of you convinceth me of fin? They had no Fault nor Imposture to lay to his Charge, nothing to produce or prove against him, and why should they have suspicious Thoughts of him more than of others amongst themselves, that did, or might attempt to do what he had done? Upon these two Arguments our Lord makes the Inference I have taken notice of before, namely, But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you.

John 8.

-

-

0

of

n

e

r-

ıt

e-

y

m

10

n-

ns.

of

to

or

ney

or ne ?

kes

ore,

irit

unto

you.

you. But being willing wholly to remove an Objection fo prejudicial to the Defigns and End of his Mission, and so dangerous to the Souls of them that might be missed by this Suggestion, he returns again to prove himself and his Works free from any Correspondence or Communication with the Devil; faying thus, " Or else how can one "enter into a Strong Man's House, and spoil "his Goods, except he first bind the Strong "Man; and then he will spoil his House?" What does this Similitude and Argument but represent that Satan was strong indeed and powerful? But he dispossessing him of his Goods, turning him out of those whom he possessed, had shewn that he had mastered him, and consequently that he did not for this make use of Satan's Power, but a Power that was greater than his, which they faw employ'd to his Overthrow. And further our Lord fays, " He that is not with me, is "against me; and he that gathereth not with "me, scattereth abroad: That is to say, They knew the Proverb, He that is not on one's side, is not for a Man's turn or assistance: He therefore plainly coming and acting against Satan; as appeared by his casting out Devils, could not be suspected to have Correspondence with him, but had made it appear fufficiently that he was an Enemy to the Devil and his Works. All this long Reafoning might have been spared, and the Thing

Thing answered at once, if it could have been answered with Truth in this Author's way; and that must have at once removed all Objections, and left no room for Error, if this had been the Jews Fundamental Error. that they thought the Devil could do great Works, when indeed he could do none, Would Christ have argued with them fo long, and not have restored them to a right Sense in this Matter? I for my part can never think that Christ instead of dissipating their Prejudices, would have left and confirmed them (as this his way of reasoning must confirm them) in their Error, had this been an Error. But he went another way, we fee, to remove their Prejudices, and as the Scriptures had given them those Ideas they had of the Power and Operations of the Devil, necessarily must go the way he did: And Jesus, who was Truth it self, needed not to go about to clear himself and his Works from Suspicion by a Falshood, being able to clear himself and them by Truth irrefistible.

Ca

27

200

W. fi

b F b

2

P

vi ar

W

Se.

M

bi

fh

te

Effay, p. 88.

Here I must recapitulate with our Author what he has Proved, and what I Agree to; and as I do this, shall insert what additional Things are also Proved. As first, that it was foretold by the Prophets, that He who was to come, the Christ, or the Messiah, should work great Miracles; and that twas accordingly expected by the Jews he should

ve

25

all

if

or,

at

ie.

fo

ht

an

ng

n-

ng

his

y,

as

eas

of

he

f,

nd

be-

th

hor

0;

10-

hat

He

ah,

hat he

uld

should do fo. (And here I must put this Author in Mind, that he had observed the Messiah should work many and great Miracles; and that the Jews expected him to work many and also great.) Next, that Fe-(us of Nazareth did actually work Miracles, and by them proved himself the Christ. and was received as fuch by those who closely attended to his Works. And I have added to this, that Jesus did actually work many Miracles; and proved also, That the many great Signs which he shewed to the end we should believe him to be the Christ, were not Precarious Miracles, but incontestible Proofs of a Divine Power acting and being with him; and that 'tis not for his Person's fake that his great Works are to be believed Miraculous, but rather the Works themselves being Miraculous, shew us what manner of Man he was, that this was in truth the Christ, And lastly, that Jesus himself told the Jews, that God had given him Power for these works, on purpose to convince the world that he came from God, and was the Christ, &c. and that Miracles were his Credentials. To this I have added, that Jesus likewise told the Jews, that Mofes wrote of him; and that if they believed Moses, they would have believed him; and bid them to fearch the Scriptures and they should there find his Gredentials, that they testified of him; and that Christ argued with with the Jews concerning the Power by which he did his Works; and shewed them from the Nature of his Works that they could not be of the Devil; but must be done by the Spirit and Power of God: And likewise from the purport of his Doctrine, viz. its fulfilling the Law and the Prophers, that they were obliged to receive it as being consistent with the former Revelation, which was with them out of all doubt.

I do not know therefore ( to use this Author's words ) that any thing can be plainlier proved from the Scriptures, than these Points; and must hereupon make this Confequence which follows unavoidably; and therefore I should say rather, makes it felf, viz. That the Doctrine of Jefus Christ is true, and his Gospel ought to be believed, because it was Prov'd, Establish'd and Confirmed by Miracles, (I add ) and not on ly fo, but conforant to and testified by the Scriptures and the former Revelation, which God had established and confirm a by Miracles before, (this teftifying of him and of his Works and Doctrine ) and because it was also built upon such Works as for their kind, and nature, and number have put it beyond doubt or all just exception at least, that they were the Effects of a Divine d them to fearch the Seciences and swoq

Essay, Pag. 89. Well! but our Author's Scholar, who has always made this Consequence in his Mind,

" has

1

ł

0

I

1

" has so often seen it overthrown (he says) "by Writers of all forts, both Ancient and " Modern, very good Christians all and "very Learned, that he knows not what to "think of it." That this should be overthrown by good Christians, is something strange : But I must guess at his meaning it does to him feem to be overthrown in effect, by an Opinion commonly held among Christians; namely, "That a Man must "not judge of the Truth of a Doctrine by "the Miracles that are wrought in Confir-" mation of it, but must judge of Miracles "by the Doctrine they would establish " This the Scholar and the Master both conclude to be downright begging the Question, and confequently no folid Maxim; and 'tis directly contrary, they fay, to that which is implied in Fefus Christ's establishing his Doctrine upon Miracles: neve noitaleves

S

h

is

n

ift

d,

n-

m

he

cli

Ai-

of

ent

neir

t it

aft,

IHE

1125

ind,

has

Before I speak directly to this Case, it is set to be observed, that the Writers who have laid down this Maxim or Rule, are of Two sorts; some for instance give this sor a Rule, but it is with respect to a former Revelation only; Others lay it down for an absolute Rule. Those that go so far as this, laying it down for an absolute Rule, have this to say for themselves; namely, That Natural Religion and Human Reason teach us to distinguish things morally Good and Evil, and we certainly know one from the other; and like-

likewise that those things that are morally good, are certainly to be concluded agreeable to the Will of God, which we know from Right Reason: And by this they say we are to judge of Miracles whether they be af God; if Miracles are wrought to establish a Doctrine that is contrary to Right Reason, it must be concluded that they are not of God, who would not fuffer the World to be deceived by any Power from him; and who cannot be supposed to contradict himfelf, to overthrow that Light of Reason and the Principles thereof, which he hath implanted in the Human Nature. And as the things which Natural Religion and Right Reason teacheth, are known by the Light of Nature antecedently to any Revelation; but these Doctrines which depend upon Miracles, fuch as we come to know only by Revelation, even this (they fay) is not begging the Question, because the Miracles are not judged of by the Doctrines they are used to prove, but by Truths known before antecedently to Revelation; and the Miracles are for Proofs of fuch Truths as were not known before. How far this will hold good I shall not pretend to say or difpute; it not being my Opinion.

ł

9

IB

W

fic th

が出る

W

m

former Revelation. For I dare not fay that my Reason is to oppose any thing that Miracles shall be wrought to prove: But must acknow

acknowledge in Reason that Miracles are a fign of the Power, and confequently a Proof to me of the Will of God. By my Reafon whene I am not able to conceive that any one can work a Miracle, but he that has power from God? As I take all that I fee and know ver Nature to be the work of God, that is invisible, To when I see Alterations therein, and Effects that are Sighs of fome great invilible Power? I think God's hand therein ? and I cannot imagine that he thould ute or thew his Power to or for any evil End of Purpole. T cannot by my Reafon alone be certain that there are any Damens, either good or bad Spirits? nor know Tany thing of their Power. Neither can I by my Reason alone come at any great and certain Knowledge of God, beyond this, that there must be such a Being as is the Cause of all Things, band that he is wife, good and Great : And therefore where I fee his Power I will not pretend to question his Will. But as I come to fee and confider that there are Operations and Effects in the World (fuch Works of Power as I should have thought tione but God could do) to be done nevertheless for different Ends, and in opposition to each other; which in Reason therefore I must think to be the Works of different and feveral Powers: Hereupon, as my Reason will not allow me to think there can be more Gods than one, I must fall in with the Opinion

3

ot es

y

ne

as

ill

if-

) a

nat

Ai-

ust

W-

Opinion of the World, that there are Demons; and therefore I should defire to fee which of these Powers could give me greatest cause to believe it to be the Power of the Great God; and which of those Pretenders, acting by the help of fuch Powers, could give me greatest cause to believe him sent of God; and he that should shew and give the certain Signs of an Infinite Power, and prove himself Superior, I should have Reafon to think was the Power of God indeed: And after a Revelation once established and received upon an undoubted Proof of God's Power and Authority, if any after this shall pretend to do Works of Wonder to have Credit with me, inalmuch as I have known Pretences to be made, and great Things done of this kind by Powers which could not stand in competition with that Power which I have acknowledged; and especially if that Revelation which I have owned, and is with me out of Question, shall have given me warning not to hearken to any fuch Signs, if wrought to feduce me from that Truth which I have received; I shall certainly think my felf bound to examine into the Power working fuch Signs, to find whether it be of God, and into the Doctrines for which fuch Signs are wrought, whether they are consistent with that Truth which I have received already; and if found otherwife, conclude these Signs to be the Works

fi

h

be M

**bf** 

bu

0

vh

ot

0

va'

Chi

les

d

nig

ear

od

of fome deluding Powers, and not the Works of God, whom I cannot suppose to contradict himself, and who has given me notice that fuch Attempts would be made to feduce from him. Upon the supposition therefore of a former Revelation received upon undoubted Miracles, and a Notice therein that Pretenders would arise (which is the Case supposed as Christianity is established) I will adventure to fay, It's no begging the Question, to say, that we must not receive my New Doctrine upon Miracles, but must examine the Power working fuch Miracles; and the Doctrine depending on this Proof, by the Revelation already received, and if that testifie of the Power, and the Doctrine e found confistent with that, then are the Miracles to be acknowledged as the Works of God, and the Doctrine to be received: but otherwise the Miracles may, and ought o be rejected as not the Works of God; vho, as he cannot contradict himself, canot use his Power to overthrow what by his ower he has established. Nor is this any Mall by contrary to what is imply'd in Jesus nine hrist's establishing his Gospel upon Mirafind les, but is the Thing he allowed and appealrines to, that his own Person and Miracles ether hight be received and acknowledged. hich earch the Scriptures (says he) they testifie of e, &c. And again, If I by the Spirit of od east out Devils, then is the Kingdom of God 0 2 come

therorks

t

e

d

1-

:

id

Ls

all

ve

vn

ngs

ald

ver

ial-

red,

ave

any

rom

to know assuredly that they were to receive him, for that he had shewn them he did his Works by the Finger of Godgman A

Effay, p. 90.

But there is another Trouble upon this Disputant's Spirits; "He does not know "what to do with those People, who affirm " that the Devil can also work great Mira-" cles, and can affift wicked Men also in "working them." These are but the same Men that faid, Miracles must be judged of by the Doctrine they would establish, and must be brought to, and examined by the former Revelation. This Opinion does not at all void the Purpose of our Saviour, nor the End for which he wrought his Miracles that is, to gain Belief to his Doctrine. For he appeals to the Former Revelation, that it might be known that he and his Works were of God: He proves from the nature of his Works, that they could not be of the Devil; and then argues, If I by the Finger of God cast out Devils, then is the Kingdom of God come unto you. But (fays this Di sputant) "If the Devil can work Miracle " as well as Jefus Christ, and Men assisted by "the Devil, as well as Christ's Disciples "what Proof can Miracles make that a Do arine is from God?" This Novice must be told, that he has not put his Question upon a right Supposition; for as there was a pre cedent Revelation, there it must be suppo

ar

kr

th

cle

tu

Ch

Re

200

rits

alr

tur

fev

Dif

ghe

his

his

WO

irm

irain

ume

of

and

the

not

nor

les

For

that

orks

e o

the inger

Di

cle

dby

ples

Do

A b

1por

pre

ppo fee sed one part of his Question must have had an Answer: For otherwise, Supposing the Devil to work Miracles, no Revelation could be admitted upon Miracles wrought by the Power of God, but his Power must have been distinguished from that of the Devil, and shewn superior to it; as it appeared to be when God gave his Testimony to the Revelation of Moses. And now let his Question be put on the Supposition of a Precedent Revelation, and it is nothing; for if by that Precedent Revelation, or by any other way, I can distinguish that Jesus Christ and his Disciples acted by the Finger of God, and that the others have not God's affiftance, but do their Works by the help of some other Power, then the Doctrine of Christ and his Disciples shall be received, because I know of a truth that God is with them; the others Doctrine shall not, because I know them not to be of God: And as to the Devil's having a Power to work Miracles, and to affift Men to do them, the Scripture and that Revelation which was before Christ, did plainly suppose and fay it; as his Revelation and Gospel do likewise suppose and fay no less of the Power of wicked Spirits, and wicked Men. The Thing has been already confidered, and feen in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and there are leveral Passages in the New, of which this Disputant seems apprehensive, which will put our Author very hard to it, now we come with him to object them.

5

P

11

h

ti

(

ON

fi

N

ir

tl

60

0

h

h

h

S

ar

01

th

M

be

an

to

4/1

cu

D

to

no

As that Passage, Matth. 24. V. 24. - There shall arise False Christs, and False Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch, that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very Elect. " If this be so (says our Author) unless Men can distinguish betwixt the "Miracles of those False Christs and those " of the True One, how shall they do to " discern the True Christ and his Doctrine " from the False Doctrine of the False "Christs?" To this the Answer is, That the True Christ hath already made himself to appear not only by his working Miracles, but likewise by making it to appear of himself, that the Power by which he wrought them was the Spirit and Power of God; and also proving his Miracles and Doctrine to be of God, from the Testimony which a former Revelation gave to both. The False Christs, though they may work Miracles, will not be able to shew their Power to be of God, nor produce a former Revelation giving Testimony either to their Works or their Do-Nor is the Issue put so weakly (as this Author would infinuate) to depend upon this Point only of Christ's giving us warning before hand not to mind or believe fuch, though they should do great Miracles His Warning is not the Means we have to distinguish them; nor is the Evidence out Saviour C

re

h,

be

r)

ne

se

to

ne

lfe

lat

elf

out

elf,

em

alfo

e of

mer

ists,

not

jod,

Te-

Do-

(as

up-

arn-

uch,

cles

e to

out

vious

Saviour has given so precarious, as to depend upon our believing well of him, and not so well of others, for this Reason, that he hath foretold that others would pretend to be what he was: But his Warning is a Caution to us not to be over-credulous without Examination, but to make use of the Means we have to distinguish Pretenders from True Prophets; namely, by enquiring whether their Power be of God, and by bringing their Works and Doctrine to the Test of the Former Revelation, which we know to be of God.

This Author feems to press very much upon those that are of a different Opinion from himself about the Devil's Power in working Miracles, with the Epithet True, which he has added of himself to what our Saviour has here faid of False Prophets shewing great Signs and Wonders; thereby thinking to get an advantage of those who hold this Opinion: For if they will not infift upon it, that the Works of fuch False Prophets are True Miracles, he thinks his Interpretation shall be admitted; that is to fay, that by Signs and great Wonders in this place we are not to understand Miracles, but only Things astonishing and amazing, which are not miraculous: But if they insist upon it, that the Devil can work True Miracles, he then thinks to press them with this, that Christ's were no more, nor other, and consequently there

being no difference in the Miracles, one must prove as much as the other mivet all this is no more than Fallacy and Quibble upon the Words Miracle and True : For let it be noted here, that though in the common way of speaking, there is a difference made and understood between a Miracle and a Sign, yet in the Sense, and in the Original Language of the Scripture there is no difference at all. That which is faid to be a Miracle of our Saviour's doing, is no other in the Language and in the Sense of the Scripture than onueior, a Sign; that is to fay, a Work wrought and given as a Sign of some Divine Power with him: And Works of Wonder and Power which are expressed in the Original by περατα, μεγάλα περατα, and δωάpers; i. e. Wonders, great Wonders, and Powers, or Powerful Works, are in the Sense of Scripture convertible Terms with on wea, Miracles, that is, or Signs of a Divine Power, because Works of Wonder and Power are the only Signs or Tokens we can have of the Presence of such a Divine Power. But now it is not supposed indeed, that when our Saviour speaks of False Prophets shewing great Signs, that those great Signs shall be True Tokens of the Presence and Power of God; nor is it thought by them that hold the Opinion, that the Devil is able to work Miracles, that those shall be True Signs of the Power of God. The work-

r

e

)-

y.

d

2,

14

ce

le

10

re

rk

ne

ten

31-

a-

nd

he

ms

fa

der

we

ine

ed,

ro-

reat

ence

by

evil

hall

The

rk-

workings of Satan with all Power and Signs, and with all Deceivableness of Unrighteounefs, are in this Sense no more than ly ing Wonders; that is, they are not True Tokens of the Power of God all the while. Nevertheless, in another sense, they are μεγάλα σημέτα, great Miracles; they are τίν earn if Sundpers, Works of great Wonder and Power, that are onuea, Signs or Miracles, being Works of like Wonder and Power with those that are offered and shewn by the Lord's Prophets: They are, fo far as we can distinguish them by our Senses and common Observation, ounea, properly Signs of fome Invisible, Supernatural Power. So as let a Man take one of these Works, and one of those which has been done by a True Prophet, and offered by him as a Sign, he shall not be able by his Senses to distinguish the one from the other; so as to fay, this is a Work of Supernatural Power, but that is not; this is a Miracle, the other not. Both are therefore Signs alike, being Signs of the Operation of some Power invilible: Whether the Work be of God or of the Devil, that may not appear however from the Work it felf, but be left to further Enquiry and Scrutiny. There is nothing but Amusement therefore in this Author's Objection, "That if Miracles will " prove one Man to be the Christ, 'the like "Miracles will prove another Man to be " fo :

" fo; i. e. they will prove neither of them "the Christ." For the Scripture speaking of False Christs and False Prophets shewing great Signs, does not suppose the like Miracles shall be wrought by False Christs, as by our Saviour: For how much soever alike they may be as to the Works themselves, they will not be alike as to the Power by which they are wrought; and there being Means to distinguish and discern that Power, the one will prove Jesus the True Christ, as his Works were done by the Spirit of God; the other will prove of others the contrary, or at least no way prove what they would make the World believe.

t

he

Nor is it so little a matter, that of our Lord's foretelling, that False Christs and False Prophets would arise and shew great Signs and Wonders, but that this ought to keep us from regarding or believing them. It will not be infifted on however, that this should be a sufficient Reason of it self, why the Miracles of others should have no Credit. And therefore our Author might have fpared his Reflections on this Prediction, as though it were a Thing easy to be foretold, "being indeed a very reasonable and likely " Guess, from the usual Fate of Philosophy, "that findeth Adversaries who go about to " fupplant and overthrow that of another, "to substitute their own Opinions." 'Tis not worth while to dispute with himabout what

Effay, P. 93. he fays upon this Point; otherwise a Man might observe Absurdity enough. For tho all Men offer at Reason, and pretend it for different Opinions; yet if there be any such thing as Reason, that Man would be taken for a Fool, that should pretend to foretell, that others should come after him, and with equal Reason oppose the Principles which he had laid down with Reason: And, as I know of no Man that ever did, fo I am apt to think, no Man ever will go about to continue to himself the Honour of a Sect, by a Thing fo ridiculous. Besides, there might be feveral things faid to shew, that whatfoever a Man might guess (or conjecture) of others coming after him, and opposing his Philosophy with pretence of Reason; there can hardly be any such thing as Guess, of others coming after a Man and working Miracles, by a Man that himfelf wrought any especially: For as this Man must know, that the Works of this kind are above Human Power, he could not be able to guess, that the Power invifible which affifted him, would affift others; and without it, he must know, that no Man could do the like Works. Case, that a Man having the Devil's Assistance for Works of this kind, might, from his Suggestion, take upon him to foretell, that others should be assisted to do the like Works, and that Evil Spirit intended to affift

fift in like manner : yet the Prediction could not be made with certainty; because God might prevent, and lay a Restraint up on him and his Instruments. And as our Saviour had the Power of God for his Works of that kind, he could not have foretold but by the Spirit of God, that any after bim should arise and shew the like Signs; not even though he had known the Power of the Devil likewife sufficient for such Works; because, as he could not have known but by the Spirit of God, that God would give the like Power to another; fo neither could he know, but from the same Spirit, what Permission God would give, or what Restraint he would lay upon Satan's Power. Nevertheless, I shall not argue, that Christ's foretelling the arising of false Prophets, and that fuch should shew Signs and Wonders, is in it felf a Reason sufficient, for no Credit to be given to the Signs of any that might come after him: Because I do not find, that our Saviour made use of his Prediction for this Purpose; nor indeed, that it hath been commonly understood, that his Prediction was intended for any thing more than a necessary Caution in the Case; viz. That before Men gave credit, when they should hereafter see such Signs, they should find by what Power fuch Signs were wrought; they should bring and subject them, and the Workers of

of them, and the Dorrines of fuch , to that Test, to which it was known that Christ offered his Works, and his Doctrine to be tried by; that is to fay, the Scriptures, and the precedent Revelation; and thus examine all Pretenders and their This Warning likewife, that our Works. Saviour hath given, may well remove all that Suspicion, and evil Surmise which a Man might be apt to have; if barely by the Strength of his own Reason, without having recourse to Revelation, he should undertake to judge of fuch a Matter, and fuch a Case as this. It might be a Surprize to a Man's Reason at first, to see Miracles wrought for contrary Purpoles, and in Opposition to each other: But the Power of God having manifested it self, by putting a Stop and Check upon all opposing Powers; to as these could do nothing when God thought fit to controul them; and coming to know by Revelation, that those Powers; which work and affift to the working Signs opposite to God, and such as act by his Spirit and Power; are Devils, and not Gods; are Evil Spirits, that have indeed great Force, and Subtilty, and Power, but are limited and controuled at all times by God, and can do nothing but by his Permission: It shall be no Surprize, that Works above human Power are fometimes done by wieked Men, affifted by invisible Powers: fin.

e

r

n

S

Effay,

98.

Powers; nor shall it shake a Man's Faith or Belief of the Truth, which he hath received upon the Credit of those whom he knoweth to have wrought Signs and Wonders, in the Name, and by the Power of God. Neither can there be any Cause for any man to think evil of God, for what he permits of this kind for wife and just Ends; but rather the contrary, in respect of the Notice, Warning, and Caution given us before-hand, to take heed we be not feduced, nor deceived by fuch falle Prophets; of whom we are fore-warned, that we might be fore-armed against them.

But our Author has still more to fay, Why by Signs and Wonders here, we are not to understand Miracles. "There are

P. 97, and " (he fays) abundance of things that come "to pass, that are extraordinary strange "and wonderful, which we can give no "manner of account of: Some of which " it may please God to permit Evil Men, " or Evil Spirits, to bring to pass; by "which they shall endeavour to seduce un-

"wary People. But he values them not at " all, if he cannot understand them to be " properly Miracles." 'Tis very much, methinks, he should not understand them to be Miracles; if Evil Men, by the Help of

Evil Spirits, bring them to pass. For in that Case, when Men do extraordinary, and

strange, and wonderful Things, which we

can

tl

N t

h

6

f

3

B

a

k

P

t

5

t

J

I

I

(

•

can give no manner of account of, how they should be done, and which we cannot think possible to be done by Human Power; are they not onuela merala, great Signs; Surapers Works of Power; and reparte, Wonders? He must not pretend to fay, they are not Miracles, because, for ought he knows, the Power of Evil Spirits may fuffice for the doing them; that (I am fure) is begging the Question on his Part: That is to fay, he believes that God will not permit Evil Spirits to work Miracles; and why a Because he shall not think those things to be Miracles, which, for ought he knows, they may have Power to do. I am perswaded, we shall never be at any Certainty in discoursing on these Matters, until it be agreed, That the great Works, which the Prophets of the Lord have wrought, and offered, and given as onueia, Signs of the Divine Power with them; are Miracles properly fpeaking: And then the Way of deciding the Question, that has given us fo much perplexity about Evil Men, and Evil Spirits working them, will be by this other Question; Whether Evil Men, by the Help of Evil Spirits, ever did, or can ever do, the like Works? And if fo, it must be refolved, that these doing the same Facts, these are also able to shew on puela, Signs or Miracles. But still it will be Matter of further Enquiry, by what Power fuch Signs and

0

t

a n P

8

Occ

u

ER C

da

h

Be

ry

hi

he M

Na

uc

fuch

haps, from the Inflances which but Maphor has given us, of Things strange, other are not in his Opinion Miraculous, I may show him, that in his way of talking, there can

be no manner of Certainty; there is no di

stinguishing between a Miracle of and what

he fays is only a Sign or Wonder : There being not one of those Instances that he

has given, but what I shall shew to be properly Miracles, when such Works are right. ly considered according to the Case in hand; that is to fay, a Man's doing them by the Affiltance of fome Power invitible. "Centaur, Hyppogryph, and a flying Dra-"gon, are things (he fays)"that were never feen; but if he should chance to fee "a Dozen of them together, he Hould red-"kon it no Miracle; and yet no Man Hwing, perhaps, could give an account of "their Generation." Truly I am apt to believe him ; that if he should see fuchla Creature, or many such together, By chant, he should think it no Miracle 9 But what would he think, if this were not a Chance; but a Man should come to him, cand tell This Sign shalt thou have of the Lord; that the Lord will do the thing that he hath

Spoken by me: Lo! a Centaur, Hyppogryph,

and flying Dragon, are Creatures that thou

thall not only be brought One, but many

Effay, Pag. 98.

bas

è

V

n

it

re

d\_ E.

d;

ie

A

4-

fe-

(de ê.

मां की

hla

net,

Hat

ice;

tell

rd; bath

ph,

hou

here

ariy

fuch Creatures here in place before thee this Instant: Would he not own this for a Miraculous Sign ? I affirm, that even if fuch Creatures were known to be in Nature, but had never been seen in this Part of the World; the bringing a Number of them together in an Inflant, would be a real Miracle; much more, as such Creatures never have been seen nor known in any Part of the Earth. And I appeal to this our Author himself, whether he has not owned a less Thing than this to be a Miracle, in Moses's and the Magicians bringing up Frogs, out of the Water, upon the Land of Ægypt. It is no Miracle, I suppose, to lee Frogs, nor to fee in the Waters great Numbers of them, nor to see them come up upon the Land; but that the Streams, Rivers, and Ponds throughout a whole Country, did bring forth Frogs in so abundant a manner, that they came up out of the Waters fo thick and fast, as to cover the Land, and fill the Houses, and even Bedchambers of the People of the Counry; and this at the word of Moses, &c. was what made that Miraculous, which his Author has owned to be a Miracle. If he will fay, that he has owned this for a Miracle, because it never was known in Nature, that Frogs bred and came up in uch abundance; the fame thing may be eid of his Centaurs, and more. There is nofuel

ar

ba w at as A re to th

Siz Lo Sh

or

on the

h

to m

rat

vei

Pro

ma

he

ay

O T e

nothing that he can fay, to make out the Miracle of Mofes in this Action, but what shall make out the Thing we are now speak. ing of to be a Miracle, in any Man that shall be able to bring it to pass. Thus again, as to another of his Instances: "The Sun, (he fays) we know, journeys from East to West; that is the Course that "God appointed him to run: this he " calls the fettled Course of Nature. Now, " in it felf, it is no greater a Thing, to "journey from West to East, than it is from "East to West; but we should account it a " Miraculous Thing, to fee him step but Six Paces backward, from West to East. I shall allow it a Miracle, for the Sun to go back; but I am able to offer him somewhat of a Reason, why it should be accounted a Miracle, for the Sun to go forward Ten Degrees, (that is to say) in an Instant: And that is, that if the Sun should move forward at the word of a Man, with that Swiftness, as to run its Course of Ten Hours in One; it would be a Change and Alteration in the Course of Nature and consequently, according to this Au ther's own Rule, a Miracle. For a fmuch as according to the fettled Course of Nature, it would have gone but that Space if Ten Hours, which now it would have gone in One at the word of a Man, who (W know) has no manner of Po wer to make 201

0

4

L

le

n

at

le

V,

to

m

: a

ut

yt.

to

ne-

ac-

for-

an

Sun

lan,

e of

nge

ure,

Au

uch

Na-

ce in

zone

(W

nak

20)

any Alteration in the Sun's Natural Motion, and can no more move it forward than backward. This Author will allow likewife, I hope, that when the Sun flood fill at the word of Joshua, it was a Miracle; as well as when it went back in the Dial of Abaz. But further I take notice, in reference to this Instance, of what Isaiah said o King Hezekiah, when he asked for a Sign hat the Lord would heal him, and that he hould recover of his Sickness. This 2 Kings Sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the 20. 9. Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken: Shall the Shadow go forward Ten Degrees, or go back Ten Degrees? I think hereupon, that the one must be a Sign as well as the other: And though Hezekiah answers hereupon, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down Ten Degrees; this will prove no more, than that it was a light thing comparatively, to what it was for it to go back; yet I presume the one as well as the other to have been a Miraculous Sign, or the Prophet could not have proposed both; only Hezekiah desired the greater; as any man would, as that which would give him he greater Certainty. And now for what this Author further

And now for what this Author further lays; viz. That "he will assure us, he does account the Turning Water into Wine, or a Wand into a Serpent, a greater Miracle, than the walking of a huge P 2 "Mount

" Mountain for Two Miles together: Be-" cause he knows not what the Power of " feveral Caufes in Nature may be; and " greater, than if he should know some "Spirit threw that Mountain Two Miles " at a Cast; because he knows not what " the Force of Spirits may be." This Auther, above all Men, should not talk of greater or less Miracles; who has pretended, that the same Power is necessary to work a little, as a great one: But be the one greater, and the other less, it's nothing to those that are of a different Opinion from him; fo the less be a Miracle, it's enough for their purpose. And that this will be fuch, whenever it shall be wrought, I shall force him to acknowledge; provided I may be allowed to put his Argument into a confistent Form; (which is a Trouble I am too often put to; whether from the defignedly, or accidentally confused Way of our Author's expressing himself, cannot fay.) If he would have us to comwith the walking of a Mountain, fo as to judge which is the greater, which the less Miracle; or rather, whether as the one a confessed Miracle, the other (if it should come to pass) were to be esteemed such He must not speak of the one, as done by Man; and of the other, as happening, o coming to pass we know not how: But th Cal

a

k

2

th

kı

fic

th

th

Pe le

W

e-

of

bn

ne

les

lat lu-

of

id

to

the

ing

ion

e-

vill

, I

ded

in-

ou-

rom

used

om-

ine

s to

lef.

ne 1

oul

ich

by

5, 0

t th

Cal

Case must suppose, that a Man makes this Mountain to walk; and then it will be foon feen, whether there be any thing in the Reason he gives, why this latter should not be thought a Miracle; namely, because be knows not what the Power of several Causes in Nature may be : I would fain know, why this may not be faid against the other as well; and, at this rate, neither shall be Miraculous. And thus, when he fays further that he does account this Turning Water into Wine, a greater Miracle, than if he should know a Spirit threw that Mountain Two Miles at a Cast: His Expression is fallacious, and fo confequently must his Argument be; if he puts the Cafe of Ta Man's Turning Water into Wine, and a Spirit's throwing a Mountain, as parallel; and himself will see it; when I invert his Argument, and fay, That if I should know a Spirit turn Water into Wine, and a Man tols a Mountain; I should account the latter the greatest Miracle, and the other (perhaps) none at all: Because I know, a Man's Strength can never be fufficient to move the Mountain; but as for the Power of Spirits I know not what that may door Let the Case, Therefore, be put as it ought to be, and our Author compelled to leave his Aquivocations; and let it suppose a Man turning Water into Wine, and a Man bidding the Mountain remove

Sa

in

na

W

W

as

VI

U

45

46

"

H

П

S a

C

0

f

t

move, and the Event fucceeding in the latter Case as well as the former; and I shall say that his Reason given, of his not knowing a Spirit's Power, is no more in one Case, than in the other: Neither, indeed, can be done by Man, without the Help of some Spirit and Power invisible; and consequently, either both must be Miraculous, or neither. And, as to the Dispute which would be the greater, which the less Miracle of the two, I am not concerned with it at all in this Question; which only demands, Whether Evil Spirits may not (God permitting ) affift Men to do miraculous works? If bothmust be acknowledged such as I have proved, and this Author does not know but that the Force of a Spirit may be sufficient for the toffing of a Mountain severalMiles at a cast; then I may affirm that he knows nothing to the contrary, but it may be sufficient to work a Miracle, and to alfift a Man to do it: For I am fure if he can give no Reason but that a Spirit may be able to doit, he can give none why it should not be able to affift a Man todo it. And besides all this, our Author is very unlucky in giving this as an Instance for a Wonder, and no Miracle: For I shall prove it to be a Miracle beyond all contradiction, if our Saviour Christ, who himself wrought so many Miracles, may be allowed to know what is a Miracle. Let us observe his Words and Sayne

I

ot

in

n-

he

2:

li-

te

ess

th

e-

od

ous

as

ot

24

vehe

lay af-

can ble

be

all

ing

Mi-

cle

our Mi-

is 2

and

ay-

Saying to his Disciples, Mat. 17. v. 18. in in the Case of the Man's Son who was Lunatick, and fore vexed with an Evil Spirit; whom Christ's Disciples could not cure; When they came to our Lord in private, and asked him why they could not cast out that Devil? He tells them, 'twas because of their Unbelief; and gives this Reafon to convince them that was the Cause : "For ve-"rily I say unto you, if ye have Faith as a "Grain of Mustard-seed, ye shall say unto "this Mountain, remove hence into yonder "Place, and it shall remove, and nothing " shall be unpossible unto you." I would willingly know how our Saviour can be understood to have spoken Sense, if the Removal of a Mountain upon their bidding, were not indeed not only a Miracle, but more Miracle, that is to fay, a greater Miracle than that of which he was then speaking with his Disciples, which it seems for want of Faith they could not do; and if our Lord's Saying, - and nothing shall be unpossible to you, does not suppose this as great an Act of Power and Wonder as any what foever; I would fain know also why this should be given for an Instance of a thing impossible in Nature, but possible through Faith in God; if it be disputable whether it be a Miracle when done? To the same purpose is that which our Saviour said to his Disciples, when they marvelled that the Fig-P 4

Mat. 21.

tree presently withered away upon his word, that no Fruit should grow on it thence-forward; viz. "Verily I say unto you, if ye have Faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the Fig. tree, but also if ye shall say unto this Mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the Sea, it shall be done." The withering of the Fig-tree inflantly, will not I suppose by this Author, or at least not by any body elfe, be denied to be a Mira our Lord does not give this of the Removal of a Mountain as an Instance of an Act of greater Power and Wonder. And as our Author has been hitherto unfucky in his Inflances to diffinguish a Work of Wom der from a Minade fo I would defire h m to give me a Reafon, why the Scripture should 10 often take porice, and fay upon the mighty Works of our Savious, that his Disciples marvelled, were amazed, and affonished, and that the People wondered and were and zed; and upon that faid, Is not this the Son of David: If to be that Works of Wander and Power were not Signs of the Finger of God, and proved our Lord to be the Christ indeed; and the more of Wonder and Power there was in any Work, the more certain Sign it was, that is the greater Miracle.

Mat. 12.

Nor is there any so great cause to sear the Inconvenience which this Author does pre-

tend

e

u

e

1

22

er

31

in

nd

in

4

to

ild h

Ci-

ed,

na<sub>5</sub> Son

der

of

)W-

4111

the

areend tend himself to be so much afraid of ruis. The accounting for a world of firange Relations of most marvellous Things." For as to all fuch things that a Man fees in the World by chance, or that happen accidentally, they are nothing to the Marter in hand; neither does it signifie whether a Man can assign or not the natural Causes thereof. Those things that are not wrought by any Man, nor given for a Sign of some Divine Power with him, I need not be follicitous to know the Cause of in any such respect: But all Works of Wonder and Power; sthat is to fay, all fuch Works as make us to wonder how they should be done by Man, (for that we have never known, nor any one elle, that a Man ever did them so and which we cannot, according to the best of our Judgment, suppose possible to be done by Man () all fuch Works, if done and wrought by any Man for a Sign of fome Divine Power's being with him, mult be acknowledged Miraculous Works; if for be that they do, as they feem, exceed all the Art aud Power of Man : And the Means are with us by which they may be accounted for, either as Works done by the Romen of God, or as they may be and are otherwise done, by the Power and Affiffance of fome Demon its for I

Here is the Place where I shall attempt to hew this Author his sufficient great Mistake; which has given himself, and me, and

the

the World fo much Perplexity and Trouble: I gather it from what he has faid all along to distinguish a Sign and a Wonder from a Miracle, and great Signs from great Miracles, and from what he fays here, if he should know Some Spirit throw a Mountain: And again, pag. 100. "If he had feen an "Angel convey Habakkuk through the Air, " and had known him to be an Angel, he should "have gazed and wondered mightily, but " should not have thought the Angel "wrought a Miracle; because, for ought "he knew, the Natural Powers of an Angel " might suffice to do this." Strictly obferving what he has faid in one Case, and what the Force of all his Argument is in the other, I conclude him never to have confidered, that all those Works which were Miracles in our Saviour, or in Moses, or any of the Lord's Prophets, have no other Name in the Original Language of the Scripture, than Signs, or Wonders, or Works of Power; (the Words used both in the Old and New Testament, fignifying no more than Signs or Prodigies, or Works of Power at large.) This I am apt to think our Author never considered, but finding sometimes the Word Miracle, and fometimes Sign in our Translation, he has run away with a Notion that there is some Distinction between these two, (though 'tis plain the Scripture never could intend any fuch Distinction, which

1

1

a 5

which hath the same Word to express both) and taken the Word Miracle not in the Scripture Sense, but in a Sense which some Writers have appropriated the Word to; i. e. to fignifie that only which nothing but the Infinite Power of God can do, and which no Beings else, nor Natural Causes can ever be able to perform : To which Sense I grant the English Word Miracle, and the Latin Miraculum are capable to be appropriated; whence many well-meaning Persons, and some Learned Men too, being willing to shew that some of our Saviour's Works were fuch as no Power but that of God only could perform, have infifted, that fuch as have been performed by other Powers, are what the Natural Powers of some or other Created Beings might perform; and upon this have distinguished between Miracles in general, and Miracles properly so called; and nothing is by them allowed to be of the latter kind, which they can conceive the Natural Powers of any Created Being sufficient for: Whereas the Original Words of the Scripture will have no Argument of this kind; nor will those Passages therein, that refer to the great Power of Evil Spirits, admit it, The Words जामसंद, त्रंद्याच, ठिप्पर्वmer, are in the Sense of Scripture the same; all Works of Wonder and Power are onpela, Signs (which our Translators call Miracles, not without Reason, because miraculous; that 15

d

ne

re

or

her he

rks

old

nan

r at

bor

the

our

oti-

veen

ture

hich

is to fay, Wonderful Works are Signs of a Divine Power.) It's true indeed the riogra and Smanns are to be taken with fuch a Limitation, as is necessary for their being onusia, Signs of some Invisible Power, and condequently must be understood to be such Works of Wonder and Power; as are above the Power of Man that shews them; otherwife they would not be Signs of Some Invifible Power with him. But further the Scripture cannot intend they should be limited, because it speaks of Satan's Instruments shewing great Signs, and doing Wonder's. And withal, whoever will consider, will find that the Lord's Prophets have wrought for Signs of their coming from God, Things which we cannot conceive but they may be in the Power of Evil Spirits : as Elijah when he faid, If I am a Man of God, let Fire come down from Heaven: For I believe whoever reads Fab, cap. 1. 16. will think of the Fire that fell from Heaven, and confumed Fob's Serwants and Sheep; that (although the Servant that escaped to tell him, fays, The Fire of God had fallen from Heaven; as knowing no other) it was really a Fire from Satar, who had a permission to use his Power against Job: Nevertheless, it being in the Power of God always to controul the Power of Evil Spirits, he could at any time they his Power above them in these Works and Signs, as he did when the Magicians contell-

i

C

F

f

h

h

th

ar

tu

to

fh

th

w

be

US

Se

ed with Moses, restraining their Power in a Thing that was to our apprehension less than what they had done before; and in the Contest that Elijah had with the Prophets of Baal, where the Devil was not able to affift those Idolatrous Prophets, but was restrained from doing a Thing which I prefume he did in Job's Case, and which I think fcarce any Man will fay is above his Power to do, fupposing no Restraint and mon Bun

upon him.

1-

1-

7e

r-

1-

p-

d,

W-

nd

iat

as

we

he

he

nwn

ads

hat

er-

er-

Fire

ing

tan,

wer

the

wer

hew

and

el-

And what again more confirms me that this Author never confidered these the Scripture-Expressions, nor the Meaning of the Scripture in them, is his Saying, That if a Spirit should throw a Mountain two Miles at a Cast, he should not account it a Miracle, because he does not know what the Force of Spirits may be. "Tis much he should think any Man would dispute with him, that an Evil Spirit might work, or help to work Miracles, if nothing could be thought to be a Miracle which the Force of an Evil Spirit might do: Or that the Scriptures, when they speak of the Devil's Power to affift his Agents to shew great Signs, should mean therein that the Devil might do this; and that yet it were to be supposed, whatever Works the Devil's Power might be conceived fufficient for, could not be to us Signs or Miracles. 'Tis impossible the Scriptures should imply such a thing as this, which

W a

0

h

tl

A

te

th

hi

ra

al

th

M

T

CO

ca

is

ma

Sp

**Ita** 

asl

fuc

Po

dougle,

which is an absolute contradiction to it self; viz. That the Power of an Evil Spirit should do that Thing, which if it were known that a Spirit could be able to do, were for that Reafon not to be accounted that Thing, but fomething elfe. Therefore the other Instance that is given to shew that there may be Events which amaze and confound, but are not miraculous, I think needs no Anfwer: This Author in giving that Instance, and arguing from it, is as a Man that fights with his own Shadow. The Angel's conveying Habakkuk through the Air, will never be disputed against him to be a Miracle, if nothing is to be thought a Miracle which may be conceived in the Power of an Angel to do: But how does he prove this, that nothing is to be thought a Miracle, if it can be conceived within an Angel's Power ? Indeed how could he know the Agent to be an Angel, but from the Miraculousness of the Work? I observe in the Case of the Angel that appeared to Manoah, Judges 13. V.19. it is faid, the Angel did wonderously, and Manoah and his Wife looked on: For it came to pais when the Flame went up towards Heaven, from off the Altar, that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the Flame of the Altar, and then Manoah and his Wife fell on their Faces, then they knew that he was an Angel of the Lord: i. e. By that Sign and Wondrous

Action they knew it. I suppose this Author will not deny but that the Powers of an Angel might be fufficient for this Action; and I would wish him to consider it, and tell us whether he thinks the Scripture relates it as a miraculous Work or not, and whether it were not really a Miracle; i. e. a real Sign of the Divine Power and Presence. 'Tis certain from the Reasoning that Manuah and his Wife had upon their having thus feen God, that he and she took it for a Sign of God's Presence and Power; that is, for a Miracle: And if this Author, or any one else will contest it, I would defire to be informed how I should know a Miracle, if wrought by God himself: I must not surely suppose of a Miracle, that it is a Work to our apprehension always above the Power of the Agent; if so, then I could not think God ever to work a Miracle, for to God I must needs think all Things are possible: If it must be thought a Work not possible for any but God to do, I must then defire to know how I shall come to any certainty about it, when as I cannot pretend my felf able to judge what is in the Power of God only to do, and what may, or may not be in the Power of other Spirits, whose Force and Nature I under-I should also further stand very little of. ask for the Reason why God should give fuch Things then at all for Signs of his Power and Presence, which we cannot but think

E

n

e

of

1-

9:

a-

to

en,

ord

en

es,

the

ous

ion

think might be in the Power of other Spirits that are not God; as in this Instance, and feveral others. It must therefore be affirme ed, that if the Work be above Humane Power, and all Means known to Man, or possible to be attained by him, the Work is then miraculous, capable of being a Sign of the Divine Power and Prefence. Thus in the Case where the Angel appeared to Manoah in Human Shape, his doing wondrously, and ascending in the Flame of the Altar, and after that being feen no more; this being a thing not possible for a Man to do, was upon that account a Miracle, a Sign by which they knew him to be an Angel, a certain Token to them of God's Prefence: And thus the Instance by this Author given of Habakkuk's being convey'd through the Air, was in it felf a Thing miraculous, as not possible to be done by Man of himself; which therefore must be a Sign of the Presence and Power of God, or some Angel, or Spirit of like Powers with an Angel. thus if our Author will dispute, that none but God can affift to this Action; that is to fay, the Conveying a Man through the Air; I agree the Case to be to his Purpose : and if he prove it, then he proves that the Devil cannot do this Miracle: But I doubt if he knows not but that the Powers of an Angel, i. e. a good Spirit may affift a Man in this; he never will be able to prove this absolute-

fa

tl

ė

lo

u

gi of

A

h

h

1

Te Pe

ar Ma

ic

ve

Йe

Sat

W

EL

ly above the Power of an Evil Spirit: And so all that he has said proves nothing against that which is said in the Scripture, of the Working of Satan to shew great Signs and Wonders, not against what is commonly understood of the Sense and Meaning of the

Scripture therein.

1

1

d

of

ri

ot f;

e-

or

nd

out

ay,

ree

he

an-

he

igel,

nis;

17

I do not at all admire therefore after all this, that our Author, who had fo little to fay for his Opinion, that was any thing natural, fhould find himself perplexed with the General Opinion of Divines and Learned Men against him, that he intreats of all Estave love not to have their Names and Authority P. 101; urged in the Case: I shall spare him, and give him only what of Revelation, and what of other Mens, and my own Reason I can: And doing this, I am not bound to defend the Opinion of those who may have faid, that God permits this to try our Faith; for will by no means think that God layeth a Temptation or a Snare in the way of his People; but that as he knoweth the Adverary and the Enemy will attempt to feduce Mankind, he hath given us warning and noice of it, and cautioned us thereupon, that we may be upon our guard, and use the Means we have to find out the working of Satan: And 'tis to God's Goodness that we we the advantage, that we are not ignorant his Devices.

Q.

And

And whereas our Author present to have an "Instance brought him, where God did " ever permit a True Miracle to be wrought "by one that would feduce from Christianity, on purpose to try their Faith:" If I could give him none, it were nothing to the matter. But let him leave out the Clause which refers to the Purpose of God's Permission (neither known to me nor him) and I shall say that himself has given us an Instance in Apollonius Tyanæus, as he has allowed his Story Credit. For notwithstanding all the Reasons that this Author has given, or may give, why we should not be seduced by his Works, yet this is certain, if he wrought any Miracles (which our Auther does own he did) God must permit him to do it (though, I presume, not affist him:) And if it were true that Apollonius bimself did not endeavour to seduce from Christianity (as this Author has pretended upon very little ground, as I think, to fay) yet this is certain, that Hierocles and others, who compared him to Jesus Christ, and argued thereby against the Truth of Christianity, defigned and endeavoured to seduce from Christianity, and confirm the Pagan Religion: So that the Thing is tantamount every way; and the Instance our Author himself has given, is the Case in Fact: But if we had it not in Fact, it must of necessity be supposed in our Lord's Prediction; which faying . 4

e

e-

u-

m

1:)

lid

ty

lit-

15

m-

ere-

de-

om!

ligi-

rery

nself

we

y be hich

ying

faying that False Christs, and False Prophets shall arise and shew great Signs to deceive, must imply God's permission of this, even though he knew these Instruments of Satan would therein feek to deceive. And let this Case be never so hard, he that will abide by the Truth, must stand by it. And I must therefore fay thereupon, "That as the Jews were to reject all Miracles, how great Pag. 1021 " foever, if the scope and intent of those " who wrought them were to carry them " from the Worllip of the only True God "to Idolatry. So are the Christians " to reject all Miracles, how great foever, " if they who work them pretend to contra-"dict the Worship of God through Jesus "Christ, and the Gospel he preached among "Men. " But this, our Author fays, is but bringing us back to what was discoursed before: "We are then, it feems, to "judge of Miracles by the Doctrine they "would establish, and not of the Doctrine "by the Miracles that establish it; only "this goes a little farther, and will not let "us believe upon the account of Miracles, "although we allow them to be true. This last is his Mistake, it goes no further than the Case was before, than the Text of Deut. 13. which supposed the Sign of which the False Prophet Spake to come to pass. And what is that, but to be true in Fact? And whereas this Author himself allows the Case Q 2 of.

of the Christians the very same with that of the Jews in this Matter, inafmuch as I have flewn and proved that the Jews were to retect whatfoever Miracles might be at any time wrought and used to draw them to Idolatry, he must now allow me that Chriflians must reject any that may be wrought to draw them to Apostacy : And as I have proved against him, that the Jews had ground to take that Scripture, Deut. 13.1. in the Sense they did, and thence to conclude as they did concerning God's permif fion of False Prophets to shew Signs that might come to pass, that nevertheless they must reject them, if used to draw them to Idolatry: fo I take my felf to have shewn that there is nothing in what this Author has hitherto faid, why this Passage of our Saviour concerning the arising of False Prophets, and shewing great Signs, should be otherwise understood than the Christian World hath hitherto apprehended.

And now as for the Answer which this Author gives in mockery to his Scholar's Question, What need was there of any Miracles at all? viz. "O take it right: Christi"anity was to be established by true un-

"doubted Miracles at first, and so establish-"ed, that nothing but the most perverse and

"wicked Creature living could hold out

" against it: And might not a Doctrine set" tled thus by Miracle, be again ventured to
" a Mi-

in

ıt

re

d

I.

£

at

y

to

17,

28

1

0-

be

an

115

r's

11-

11-

111-

lh-

nd

ut

et-

to

" a Miracle ? Might not a Man be tried " even with a Miracle, to see if he could "depart from a Religion thus established?" I fay, in earnest, -Take it right : And as to fet it right, I will pray nothing of him or others in behalf of the Truth, but what I will undertake at any time to oblige him and others to acknowledge, fo I will not fear any thing that he has faid, or can fay to charge this Truth with an Abfurdity. Now the Right of the Case is this; namely, The Law given by Moses was establish'd upon the Miracles which God wrought by the Hand of Moses; which were wrought not only in the fight of all Ifrael, but in the fight of Pharaoh and all Ægypt, that it might be known that there was none like unto the God of Ifrael in all the Earth. And as Exod. 9. Pharaoh with his Magicians withstood the v. 14, 16. Power of God, this occasioned not only Moses's shewing the more Signs of Power and Wonder, but a Competition likewise between him and the Magicians; by the Issue of which it appeared, that the Lord was Exod. 18. greater than all Gods; for that in the Thing v. 11. wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them; even in the Signs which those Magicians pretended to give of a Divine Power before their King: So that even they that opposed Moses in his Works of Power (having themfelves affiftance from some Powers invisible, to do Things beyond the Art, and Strength, Q3

and Power of Man (finding a fudden stop put to them in their Attempts, were forced to own and acknowledge the Power of Moses superior to theirs, and to say thereof, This is the Finger of God. Moses's Revelation being thus established upon the great and terrible Things which were done, to shew that the Lord was with Moses, and to redeem his People form Ægypt, and from the Nations and their Gods: A Command is given to this People whom God had thus confirmed to bimself, that if they should see hereaster a False Prophet that should pretend to shew them a Sign of a Divine Power, faying, Go with me after other Gods, they should not hearken to that Prophet, nor his Sign, Deut. I am far from thinking that this is begging the Question on behalf of Moses's Revelation, for there is no allowance here prayed of us, that Moses's Revelation may be established upon Miracles, but there is a Proof in his Miracles that does establish it; a Proof that does not appear in the other Case where the Miracle is not to have Credit with us. For our certainty that the Lord Spake unto Moses, does not depend barely upon his shewing Signs, but upon this, that it appeared in the Competition between him and the Magicians, that the Power with bim was the Finger of God, as it was greater than all other Powers that pretended to give and do like Signs and Miracles with him. There-

2 Sam. c.7. V.23. Therefore it is, that a Miracle or Sign shew'd afterwards must not find Credit, if wrought to perfuade the going after other Gods; as well for that by this we know it cannot be of God, because it would draw us from the Worship of the One True God (who never can contradict himself, and persuade off from his own Worship; ) as because it was also known before, and appeared plainly in the Tryal, wherein the One True God demonstrated and confirmed to his People the Superiority of his Power; that though other Powers might attempt, and likewife shew the World Signs and Wonders, like unto those shown and wrought by the Power of God, yet there were none of those Powers which could stand in competition with God, but were stopped and controuled by that Power and Hand which appeared to be with Moses. And thus again Christianity fucceeding to the Precedent Revelation, and being built upon the Testimony of that Revelation, as well as upon the undoubted Miracles of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, whose Power and Works appeared to be of God, as well from the Word of Prophecy, which spake thereof, as from the Intent of the Christian Doctrine, which tended not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets; i. e. the Things of the Former Revelation; and from the Opposition which this Power gave to Satan in his Kingdom and Works; Q4 where-

n

h

r

e

n.

W

be

W

Be

G

be

to

bo

fr

tl ar

ar

ai

la

ſe

Co

W

h

b

te

C

wherein also the Power of God working with them, appeared to be above all Power of the Devil, and all those Evil Spirits which were turned out of their Possessions by it; the Divine Authority of the Gospel being thus established and proved by Proofs undeniable, and every way unexceptionable, wherein nothing hath been wanting that might confirm us, that this is the Truth of God. It may well be, as it is, required of us, that no Gospel different from that which hath been delivered, and which we have recei-

Gal. I. 8. that no Gospel different from that which hath ved, be admitted by us: That the Signs and Wonders of false Prophets, that may arise and attempt to set up themselves in Opposition to Christ, find no Credit with us: That our being foretold of the working of Satan, with all Power and Signs, and with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness, be a Caution sufficient against all such Deceiving Powers finding any Admission with Neither does this pray any Credit to be given to Christ and his Works, which is not allowed to another that cometh from God, and maketh it so appear to us, as he hath done, that God is with him; that is to fay, by the Nature as well as by the Power of his Works, and by the Testimony of those precedent Revelations, which we know to be of God: But it obligeth us to reject all those Powers, which are not known whence they are, or rather, which We we hence may know not to be of God, because opposite to him and his Doctrine, whom we know God hath fent. Nor is our Belief, as to the Power of Christ's being of God, at all precarious in this respect; that we believe him for his Works fake, and refuse to give Credit to the Works of others; because we believe him, not for the sake of his Works alone, but for the Evidence arifing from, and concurring with his Works; that is to fay, from their Opposition to, and Superiority over the Power of Satan; and the Testimony which both his Power and Doctrine had from a precedent Revelation, known before to be of God, and confirmed to us by a Power that made it felf appear to be above all others.

t

s,

h

-

IS

y

n h

d S,

eth

to.

15

om he

to

Wof

we

to

ot ch

we

I am therefore for speaking as plainly as this our Author can defire; knowing this, that the more plainly we speak in this Case, so we do but speak truly, the more evident will it be, that nothing which our Author has faid (or can fay) in this Matter, shall be sufficient to bring in question the Certainty we have of the Gospel-Truth, nor lo much as to fasten upon it the Absurdity which he pretends to lye against it, on account of its requiring that we reject the

Signs of false Prophets.

Let it then, fince he will have it so, be possible " for a Man to lose his Certainty, by the same means by which he got that Effay, " Cer-

Pag. 103.

r

h

ba

r vl

b

ej Vi

S d

Po

11

ti

e

Se d

0

p

ve

he

nu

ng

no

or

or

Pp

nf

nu

ei

"Certainty;" yet shall it not follow, that a Man may part with his Christianity, upon the score of Miracles wrought to prove it false, as fairly as he took it up upon the fcore of Miracles wrought to prove it true. For, as Christianity supposeth, and as a Christian consequently must know, that false Prophets shall arise, and shall likewise work and shew Signs of Power and Wonder, that is, Miracles; and that the Devil, that will oppose, hath great Power to oppose the Truth of God, and to affift his Instruments to give and shew Signs of Power: And as it was thought when Christ was upon Earth, that the Power of the Devil was great, and might affift to fuch Works: Which thing made our Saviour Christ to infift and prove, that his Works were wrought by the Spirit and Power of God; and that they could not be of the Devil, because of their Opposition to him; and to appeal likewise to Moses's precedent Revelation, as giving witness to his Person and his Pow-And as the Revelation of Moses likewife supposed false Prophets to arise, and the. Signs of fuch false Prophets to come to pass: And as, even before the first Revelation was received, there appeared in the World Powers different, because acting in Opposition one against the other; each shewing Signs alike, fo that until it appeared in the att Competition which was the Power of God

1

t

e

2

at

le

1-

e.

to

iis

W-

125

vil

KS:

in-

zht

hat

e of

peal

ion,

OW-

ike-

and

e to eve-

could not be discerned with Certainty rom the Works that seemed alike: And as he first Revelation was received upon the ccount of its appearing, that the Lord vas with Moses, who had shewn himself, reater than all gods, and in the thing vherein they dealt most proudly, was above bem: And again, as the Revelation of lesus Christ hath been received upon the vitness of the precedent Revelation, as well s upon the witness which bis Power carrid with it, as exercised in Opposition to the Power of Satan, and proving it self above ll his Power. As this is the Case of Chritianity established upon Miracles, it can ever be thought by any Man of common ense and Honesty, that this may be partd with upon the score of Miracles wrought o prove it false, as fairly as it was taken p upon the score of those Miracles, that were wrought to prove it true: For that he Miracles wrought to prove it false, nust lie under a manifest Suspicion, as beng against the Truth known to be of God; nd are indeed for that very Reason to be concluded the Work of some other Power; or that God cannot contradict, nor act in Opposition to himself. And even if this the new nust remain a doubt by what Power the the atter Miracles are brought to pass; (there God, being Powers different, pretending to, and shew-

ti b

b air

A V

Cb

fc

P

n

tl

Cal

G

I C

16

th N

F

n

21

h

t

60

fliewing fuch Signs;) fo that the Credit of the one will be questionable, when the Credit of the other is out of doubt. Neither shall it be said in this Case, that any thing is prefumed on behalf of the Miracles of Moses and Jesus Christ: For 'tis not any Prefumption of their being wrought by the Power of God; but 'tis the Evidence that they were fo wrought, (which was undeniable, after Moses had in the Competition vanquished the Magicians;) that has obliged us to acknowledge their being of God. Which Evidence has been renewed to us in other Competitions, which the Lord's Prophets have had with those that have add in the Name of other gods; and especially in the Power of Christ's overcoming the Power of Satan, and overthrowing his Kingdom.

But, "Two Miracles (fays this Author)" can beget no more certainty of the Truth of Christianity, than Two may beget Uncertainty of it, if wrought in opposition to it." If this be with him plain speaking I will not doubt but to prove it speaking plainly false; I mean of the Case it refers to And this not only as it supposeth that which never yet hath appeared to be, that is, as Equality as to Number and Greatness, between the Works of Christ, and whatsoever Powe shall or may oppose him; but chiefly as a concealeth the Distinction between Miracle known

of

re-

her ing

of

the

hat

de-

ion

bli-

God.

sin

Pro-

Aed

ally

the

his

01

hor

ruth

Un-

tion

king

king

s to

hich

s, all

weet

owe

.as 1

acle

now

known to be wrought by the Power of God, (as. those that have been wrought in Confirmation of the Christian Truth were known to be) and Miracles which may be wrought by Powers which are not known whence they are. He may not fay, I prefume on the one fide, but not on the other; for I have hewn that there has been no Presuming without an absolute Proof, on behalf of Christ, and his Works, that he wrought them by the Spirit and Power of God. And therefore the other which has not made that Proof of it felf, can never in Reason have so much Credit with any Man, as to render that uncertain with him, whereof he has received a former certainty, even beyond doubt and fuspicion; having known the Power of God to have given Demonstration of its Superiority in Teveral Competitions. I will, with this Author's leave, use a plain Similitude in this Matter; and the rather, because thereby our Saviour has thought fit to represent and prove his Power above that of the Devil. Put case I had seen a strong Man armed, able as I thought to keep his House and his Goods, having shewn such Signs of Strength, that I should have thought none could be greater; and nevertheless, by and by a stronger than he came and entred his House, and spoiled his Goods: If after this I fee him that was even now vanquished, appear again in his Strength, and shew Signs

N

0

er e

4

te

e

W

N

PC

G

e

t

6

1

7

•

Signs of Power like to what he did at the first; should I by this lose the certainty I had from the iffue of the Competition I had feen between him and the other, whereby I became certain that there is one ftronger than he? But I abide too long in clearing a Case which hardly any thing but defign to state it wrong, after a pretence to take it right, could have thus perplexed.

I am obliged however to say this farther

in the Cafe; namely, that this Author's Judgment at least has extreamly failed, in that he thinks that " both the Law and Go-" spel at this rate, begthe Question in hand, and presuppose their own Truth. Presuppose indeed their own Truth they do in one fense, as they will not admit it to be questioned for after-Miracles wrought in opposition to them; but presuppose in the ill Sense of the word, that is to say, beg what they presuppose and presume for their own Truth, they do not; for there is first anunexceptionable Proof for that, which is, after fuch Proof, supposed in their not admitting their Truth to be called in question. Doubtless that cannot be justly said to be prefuming for their own Truth, and begging it, which is in reality no other than supposing it after undeniable Proof. The Proof of the first Revelation rests upon the Miracles which Moses shewed; the Proof of the Power working these Miracles, that it was

Effay, p. 105. İ

I

0

r

s

ni

0:

d,

p=

me

ic-

p-

ill

nat

wil

un-

af-

nit-

on.

be

ging

sup-

root

[ira-

the

Was

the

the Power of God, rests not barely upon the Works themselves, but upon the Superiority of that Power which appeared with Moles: and gave an undoubted Proof that the Power of God was with him, and that God's Power was above all that pretended to act proudly, and flew Signs in opposition to it. After this Evidence, the Law, and after greater Evidences of this kind, (wherein God was pleased to give further Demonstrations of the Superiority of his Power in the Works of feveral of his Servants the Prophets, and especially in the Works of Fefus Christ, who was manifested to be the Son of God with Power, and who exercised his Power to the Destruction of the Power of Satan, and overthrow of his Kingdom and Works) the Gospel also supposeth its own Truth; that is to fay, that it's fo fufficiently confirmed by the Power of God, that its Truth thus confirmed should not become with us questionable upon any Signs or Miracles that may be wrought by opposing and deceiving Powers.

This is not like "telling a Man to Day that such a Proposition is True, and To"Morrow telling him it is False," as this Author would falsly as well as weakly insinuate: But if a Comparison of this nature were desired, I would say it is like the proving a thing true to Day from the most solid Reason, and against all the Art and

Cun-

h

h

he

no

an C

W

Bu

Pi

10

co

le

h

h

he

uc

he

Lo

0

be

ar

ti

Cunning of the most subtle Sophister; and telling a simple honest-meaning Man the next, that he should hold to that Truth, which himself had heard so fully proved; though that Sophister whose Prevarication and Cunning he had seen discovered and constuted, should again set upon him with his Subtilty and Fallacies, to impose upon, and deceive him.

I say now with this Author, as to the words of Christ that follow-Insomuch that if it were possible they should deceive the very Elect; that I suppose our Lord spake this to his Disciples on purpose to make them cautious of being deceived by these False Christs and False Prophets, who shew great Signs and Wonders. And I agree with him thereupon, that these great Signs and Wonders may be discovered and distinguished from those true mighty Miracles, that were wrought by Christ in favour of the Gospel; so that if Care be used, Men will not be deceived by them. This is supposed in our Saviour's fore-warning his Difciples of these Signs and Wonders, and bidding them beware of those that wrought This Fore-warning had been to no purpose, if with Care they could not have distinguished these false Christs and their Miracles, from the True Christ and his Mitacles. Not will I lay much stress upon this, that they might have been deceived, had 1

.

S

e

h

e

e

e

ns

n-

es,

of

eni

ıp-

if-

nd

ght

no

ave

neir

Mi-

poni

ed, had had they not been the Elect; but think with this Author for the prefent, that the Elect here are Converted Christians, such as were now rooted and established in the Faith; and that the meaning is, that without all Care and Attention, the foundest Christians might be deceived by these false Prophets, who would shew great Signs and Wonders. But the Inference that I make from hence, will be quite contrary to his. He takes it, hat these Words are in this respect a good Proof, that by Signs and Wonders we are not to understand Miracles; for that there s no way of guarding (he fays) against hem, they carry all before them. I take t otherways, that these Words are (on the contrary) a Proof, that by Signs and Woners we are to understand Miracles: For hat if by our Senses we could apprehend hese not to be on weiz, Signs or Miracles, here would be no danger of their deeiving us; and that the danger from them s this, that to appearance, so far as we can udge of the things in fact by our Senses, hey are like Signs to those which the ord's Prophets have wrought: But as hey are wrought by another Power, we are ot to fuffer them to carry any thing at all before them, being convinced that they annot be of God, because of their Oppotion to his known Truth.

R

Out

Our Author now comes to make Riddance of another Scripture, which lies hard upon him, 2 Thef. 2. 9. — Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders. He owns it to be a "Description of the coming of Antichrist, and that Satan shall "at that time work as powerfully and sub-

S a fi

66

66

46

66

20

"

ct

"

66

.

"

fi

"

86

16

66

"

10

16

4

Essay, Pag. 108.

"tily as possibly he can, to withdraw Men " from Christianity, and make them be-"lieve a Lye." Thus far then we agree about this Scripture. Again; the Words Lying Wonders (he thinks) may fignify either Tricks of Slight, and appearing Wonders, or Miracles that are to support a Lye and false Doctrine; the Words may import both these Senses, but he rather chuses to take them (after our Translation) Lying Wonders, that is to fay, false and deceitful Tricks, Things that may make us wonder, till we examine and discover them. I am not apt to think, that our Translators meant no more than this; or, if they did not, I rather think the Words should be taken in the other Sense; i. e. to signify Miracles to support a Lye and false Doctrine For Tricks of Deceit, are things which may be (and often are) used by Men like ou felves; which I take the utmost of Satan Power to go much beyond; and the work ing of Satan with all Power and Signs, the Author himself thinks does here import n

0-

ll

Ie

0-

b-

en

e-

ee

rds

ei-

on-

ye

ort

to

ying

tful

der,

am

tors

did

e ta-

Mi

rine

may

e ou

atans

work

, this

port

2

all that possibly he can do to deceive. The utmost of his Wonders, indeed, I esteem but as Lying Signs; because how great appearance soever they may carry with them of a Divine Power, they are not (in truth) the Effects of the Power of God: But that we by our Senses can distinguish these false Signs from the true, is what I doubt of, and can by no means depend on. To confirm me in this Opinion, I need fet down only this Author's Words; (who fays) "He Effay; " will not deny, but that Spirits may fore- P. 108, " fee many Events in their Natural Causes, 109. " which are concealed from us but not from "them; and from this Forefight they may "discover to Men a great many Secrets, "who may upon this intimation prefage " strangely. Nor will he deny them to be "Creatures of great Force and Subtilty, "and able to do a world of astonishing "Things, and able also to assist Men to "the performing many great and marvel-"lous Works." But now, whereas he fays further, that however, "fince God has been "pleased to send his Son into the World, "to reveal his Will, and (in order to our "believing him, and being perswaded by "him) to give him the Power of working "Miracles; he cannot see how God should "gain his Point upon our hearts, if the Power of working Miracles were com-" mon to any Being else with him, and he " should

" should fuffer Evil Spirits, and Evil Men, " to work True Miracles in Contradiction "to his Truth, which is built and establish-" ed upon Miracles." I give him for Anfwer, that God's Permission in this Case. does by no means suppose God's Power common to any Being else with him: His Power is above all their Power, and can controul it at any time, or in any Cafe that he pleaseth; and by this it is that he shall gain his Point upon our Hearts: By this it is that he has gained it upon the World, that hath become Christian hitherto, which never understood other than that Evil Spirits, and Evil Men by their Assistance, were fometimes, and might be permitted by God, to do great and strange Things; but that the Power of God was above them. hath been to them a fufficient Ground of Faith, that Power belongeth unto God; that among the gods, there is none like unto the Lord, there is not one that can do as he doth.

But this Author "understands (he says)
"the Scriptures that tell him, Christ did
"really work Miracles, and that he wrought
"them to gain Belief and Credit with Mankind: But he does not understand half so
"well some Passages that seem to say,
"that wicked Spirits, and wicked Men,
"may also work great Miracles, in Con"tradiction of Christ's Religion." Why
does

I

F

V

t

la

ir

k F

de

W

does he not understand them; are not the Words as intelligible as the other? This cannot be pretended; because they are the fame Words which the Scripture uses in both Cases. But there's a Difficulty arises from it, he'll fay, which he cannot well reconcile. He concludes upon fuch certain Premises, that his Belief of Christ's Do-ctrine is reasonable and good; but if so be he must understand those Passages of Seripture, which fay Wicked Spirits, &c. shall alfo work Miracles, according to the common acceptation thereof; he must take up an Opinion that destroys those Premises. I answer; This should not be a Reason for him to reject any Truth of Scripture, because he cannot reconcile it to the Premises upon which he builds his Faith; but rather should give him occasion to examine his Premises, whether they are indeed the Scripture Premises; for be sure the Scripture can have laid down no Grounds of Faith, which it felf fhall contradict. And if this be looked into in his Cafe, it will be found, that though the Premises this Author has laid down, are some of them to be found in the Scripture, yet those that he has ta-ken thence, are not all the Grounds of Faith laid down therein. The Scripture in-deed has told us, that Christ did really work Miracles, and wrought them to gain Credit and Belief with Mankind; but be-R 3

e

t

S

it

5)

id

ht

n-

10

у,

en,

hy

oes

mo

E

the

th

A

un

P

vi

it

be

N

th

ai

th

S

b

0

I

Z.

n

2

t

V

1

of Jesus Christ were wrought by the Spirit and Power of God; and from hence it requires Men to know and believe, that the Kingdom of God was come unto them. Let this, which is the chief Ground of Faith, be taken in together with the other, and there's no Contradiction in the Supposition, that Wicked Spirits may also work, and as sist wicked Men to work Miracles, implied in the Scripture which saith—Relieve not every Spirit, but try the Spirits and Powers, whether they be of God; many salse Prophets being gone out into the World.

Essay, Pag. 110.

John 4.

V. 1.

I am not well pleased that this Author calls that an unaccountable Easiness in Christians, that they believe the Scriptures in this point, and hold an Opinion which was first received from them. He will allow however at length, that the Scriptures feem to countenance this Opinion; but they shall fay it downright ( fays he ) before I believe it. I conceive there is a Scripture which does say it downright, in words as plain as it is possible to express it; which I wish he may so consider, as not to be any longer Faithless but Believing. It is in St. John's Revelation, Cap. 13. v. 13. faid of one to whom the Dragon should give his Power; some great Instrument of Satan, and Enemy to the Saints of God and his Truth; - He doth great wonders, so that he maks

rit re-

he

et

h,

nd

Π,

uf-

i-

20

N-

01

In

W

M

1

ue

h

as

h

er

S

0

2-

1;

maketh Fire to come down from Heaven on the Earth in the fight of men; and deceiveth them that dwell on the Earth, by the means of those Miracles which he had Power to do, &c. And again, Cap. 16. v. 14. it is faid of the unclean Spirits which were with the False Prophet, - They are the Spirits of Devils working Miracles. I will not infift upon it, that the first of these Prophecies hath been fulfilled in Apollonius Tyanaus, ( the Man of whom this our Author speaks well) though the Learned Grotius and Hammond are of that Opinion, upon the Account that this is one of the Facts in Apollonius's Story, that he caused Fire to come down from beaven in the fight of men; and this another of his Actions (taken notice of by Grotius) That he pretended to bring the Ghost of Achilles into an Image or Statue that was made for him, and caused it to speak, and appointed upon it, that Achilles should be worshipped, and was a Cause at the same time that the Christians were Persecuted; which Grotius thinks may answer that in the 15th Verse, ——He had power to give Life unto the Image of the Beast, that the Image of the Beast should speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the Image of the Beast should be killed. I leave this with our Author to confider, whether the Prophecy referred to and was fulfilled in him or not. This I will oblige him to own, that the R 4 Pro-

in

th

T

V

ar

n

iu

fe

th

n

fo

th

th

0

u

66

46

10

fe

fe

II

D

b

fi

Prophecy relates to some False Prophet that should arise and have the Power of the Dragon to deceive; and that the Words are plain concerning this False Prophet's Power, and his doing his great Wonders and Miracles; and that the particular Instances and Acts wherein 'tis faid his Power shall be shewn; that is to fay, making Fire to come down from beaven on the Earth in the fight of Men, and giving Life unto an Image, and causing it to speak, are miraculous Works; and that this Scripture plainly faith, as does the other speaking of the Unclean Spirits with the Falle Prophet, that the Spirits of Devils have Power to work Mirades, and may give of their Power to wicked Infruments; and that these will be permitted to do and work Miracles by them to deceive what they can I as one which

Effay, Pag. 111. And, after this, I need not answer him as to what he says; That "they do the "most Right and Honour to the Scriptures, "who clear them best from Absurdities and "Contradictions, and Consequences that "would overthrow their own Authority." At least, if I say any thing, it shall be only in his own Words. — "That we are "not to reject Truth, for the sake of Confequences that we think untoward: And "that 'tis not for him or me, to make what "Truths we like, but to make the best use "we can of what we find." That this being

Effay, Pag. 34. ing fo; most Right and Honour is done to the Scriptures, by those who believe its Truths, and do their utmost to clear and vindicate those Truth from Contradictions and Absurdities. They do it neither Right nor Honour who reject its Truths, and to justify their Rashness, pretend to draw Confequences to make one Truth overthrow the Authority of another. But Truth is no way contradictory to it felf; and therefore I make no question but that whosoever shall go about to do a thing of this kind, shall fail and be ashamed of their Attempt. But this Author has still a great Objection left; viz. That if by Wonders we are to understand Miracles, &c. "then shall Anti-"christ do as much for the Support of a "Lye and Wickedness, as the True Christ "did for Truth and Virtue; nay he shall " do the very same. And to leave no room for a Reply to this Objection, he propofes an Answer which he thinks might be made to it; namely, "That the Miracles " of false Christs, and false Prophets, shall "not be fo great nor many, as those of our "Lord:" and takes it off, as he thinks, at once; by asking, "What Reafon any Man "has to think fo?" and requiring that the Difference be affigued, "whether it shall be "in kind, or in degree and measure." Yet by all this I do not think my felf cut off from giving him an Answer; and the An-

9

0

n

n

e

Si

d

t

1-

e

d

e

Pag.rr

et

B

A

2

It

nI

t

f

i collisi

1

Pro-

Answer I shall give him is this:-That Antichrist shall not be able to give us any Proof that his Power by which he doth his Signs and Wonders, is of God; which Proof we have as to the Works of Christ. I am not therefore obliged to infift on this, that the Miracles of False Christs, and False Prophets shall not be so great nor many as those of our Lord; yet will I take notice that no False Prophet has as yet appeared, that has wrought fo great, or fo many as those of our Lord: However, as I do not find the Scripture hath given this to us for a Rule to judge and try the Works of Falle Prophets by, I neither shall give, nor insist upon this Answer. The Rule I find given us, is, -Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God: And again, Beware of False Prophets, ye shall know them by their Fruits. And again, If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine, receive him not. By this Rule, if we try them that fay, they are Apostles, and are not, we shall find them Lyars : Nevertheless, as to our Author's Opinion, that much must not be built on this distinction of greater and less, more and few, in the Case of Miracles (for which he had given very little Reason before, and gives as little now) I will take upon me to fay, that the greater, and the more, give Mankind the greater satisfaction; and God has been pleased to use many, and to give Power to his

John 4. V. 1. Matt. 7. 15. 2 John 10. Prophets to do many, and great, and especially to the Lord Christ. There is therefore some weight in the many and great, enough, I believe, to turn the Scale, if the Balance be held by an indifferent Hand. And as for that which this Author fays against this, I take it to be of little moment: It really requires no less Power (he is pleafed to fay) to make a Butterfly, than an Army of Eagles: It may be so, for any thing I know; and it may not be so, for what he can know of the Matter; I suppose our Knowledge may be much alike in that case; that is, neither of us know any thing of it: He that has the Assurance first to assert, is so far fafe, that the other cannot disprove him in a Thing that is above his reach. does it require less (he says) to restore Sight to Four Blind than to Fourscore; I should think indeed that he who could restore Sight to Four Blind, might do it to Four score; but if I should see one that had done it to Four, attempt, but not able to do it to more, especially if he should fail of doing it in a Competition (which was the Case of those Magicians that opposed Moses, and wrought Three Miracles, but found their Power stopped even in Things seemingly requiring less Power than what they had done might be thought to require) I should conclude those whom I saw limited in their Power, not to have the Infinite Power of God; I should at least very much doubt as to

S

t

e

A

Y

d

1/1

If

x

e,

5,

e-

at

no

he

en

it-

lat

he

22-

his

0-

0

t

0

t

d

b

S

I

C

V

01

je

tl

W

0

tl

b

N

ai

tu

m

V

th

tl

to their Power, whether it were of God; whereas I should have no doubt at all concerning that Power to which I faw all things possible. But here's a puzzling Case and Que. stion at last put to us, ——Our Saviour wrought an Hundred Miracles, and Moses Fifty; is the Gospel therefore so much truer than the Law? No verily, But what's this to the purpose? Every one doubtless that comes from God, comes with Truth: If in Fifty, or in the fifth part of Fifty, it appeared that Moses did his Works by the Finger of God, there's no doubt but the Message he came with was true; and if it pleases God that another of his Prophets shall work an Hundred, to shew that he comes from him, it can only prove that he also comes with a True Message: And as the Message is not the Messenger's, but his that fent him, it is as impossible that the one Message should be more true than the other, as it is that God should be less true at one time than at another: However, this is nothing all the while to the Thing in hand; no Man ever questions whether one's Meffage was more true than another's, of those that are known to come from God; but as to the certainty of the Proof of a Man's coming from God, the Question is, Whether many Miracles, may not give a Proof of this, more undoubted and unexceptionable, than few? I think it may do this reasonably in any Case, but especially in a Contest and

and Competition, here it necessarily does it. This was the Thing that confuted and baffled the Magicians of Ægypt, to see their own Power stopp'd, and that of Moses proceed.

5

S

e le

t ts

le

le

15

is 10

r,

10

0-

1;

f-

se

as

e-

of

le,

2-

est nd

But I have gone out of my way to follow this Author where I might have left him to himself, being not obliged to say how great, or how many Miracles God may think fit to permit a False Prophet to work; nor how different in Number and Degree they shall be from, how far fall fhort of those of our Saviour; this being not the Rule by which I am to judge according to the Scripture Direction, whether fuch Prophet be of God: We have for this purpose a more fure Word of Prophecy, by which to try the Spirits and Powers whence they are.

This Author is now come to make an Objection to himself concerning Simon Magus, Essay, the first great Apostate from Christianity, p. 112. who practifed Magick before his Conversion to the Christian Religion; (infomuch that all the People of Samaria gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, this Man is the great Power of God, Acts 8.10.} and after his Apostacy, is said to have returned to his Sorceries again, and to have made use of them to deceive the World, giving out that himself was the Christ: As to this Man, and the Stories related of him, this Author fays, "He verily believes he " wrought

re

hi

fe

hi

G

ha

A

ri

th

ti

to

be

Sa

te

S

S

P

tl

t

b

a

£

b

t

¥

"wrought no True Miracles, because he " was himself converted and baptized, and " continued with Philip, and wondered, be-" holding the Miracles and Signs which were " done: And he thinks, if this Man could "have wrought Miracles himself, before he "became a Christian, Miracles would not " have converted him to Christianity, nor " would he have so wondered at Philip who "wrought them." Truly this, to appearance, is great Argument, and would knock off all the Stories related of this Magician at once: For if he wrought no Miracles before, there might be some ground to suppose he could do none afterwards, he having Familiarity with that Power before, which must be supposed to assist him afterwards, if he did any; and that he could not before work Miracles, a Man would be apt to think, because of his wondring at Miracles, and becoming a Convert to Christianity upon them. But it happens there is somewhat in the Scripture Relation of this Magician's Conversion, that will spoil all this fine Argument, and render it as nothing; namely, the Miracles which Philip did in Samaria, where this Magician was, which were these, Ads 8. v. 7. "Unclean Spirits, " crying with loud Voice, came out of ma-" ny that were possessed with them, and many taken with Palsie, and that were lame, were " healed." The cafting out Devils might

reasonably convince a Magician, though himself by the Power of the Devil had done great Works; for this must plainly convince him of a Power superior to that which himfelf had known, and that the Power which himself had acted by, was not the Power of God; which he might partly see also, perhaps, in the many Cures that Philip wrought. And besides, that this Magician did work Miracles, whilft he acted his Feats in Samaria, before Philip's coming thither, I should think that the Scripture by this Author mentioned, should be a sufficient Proof; that is to fay, That all the People of Samaria gave beed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great Power of God. Tis not to be supposed that they took him to be the great Power of God, but from Signs by him shewed, which they thought Signs of some Divine Power: And as all the People of Samaria gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, 'tis not to be supposed but among some of them there must have been Skill, and Caution, and Attention to observe his Works, and that heed had not been given to him, but for fomething strange and miraculous done by him. If it shall be faid, that he bewitched them, 'tis confess'd; but the Thing is the same in effect, whether the Works of a Sorcerer be real Works, or Delusion: So that if the Works of Simon were taken for Miracles among the Samaritans

t

1-

1-

is

of

ıll

g;

111

ch

ts,

na-

any

ere

ght

ea-

tans, and they by their Senfes could not dis stinguish them from Miracles, they were the same to them, and gave them the same Reason to account him the great Power of God. And if this Sorcerer did fuch Acts before among the Samaritans, 'tis most likely he fell to the same Practices again, when he became an Apostate from Christianity, and fet up himself for the Christ: And that he did fo, is what all our Church History faith. Therefore 'tis fomewhat strange that this Author should take leave to suspend, in reference to the Stories related of this Man's Feats, that all our Church History shall signifie nothing with this Author, when Tacitus and Suctonius have such Credit with him, that he will not allow their Relation to be called in question, as to Vespasian's Miracles. I must here take leave to tell him, that the Relation given in our Church History of Simon Magus's Herefy, and his fetting himfelf up to be the Christ, and likewise his doing strange Things by the Devil's Power, to make himself believed so to be; even such Works by the help of Devils, that he was taken for a God, that almost all the Samaritans, and some of other Nations confessed him to be Tov Tporor Ded, the first or principal God, and accordingly worshipped him with Sacrifices (his Pretentions rather increasing than lessening after his feigned -reception of the Faith and Baptism ) comes Land

da of br id re ous Attened by Treneus; Justin Martyr, Terrullian, Eufebius, &c. The first and best writers and Historians, and most to be depended on of any that we have; ( whose reat Names and Authority will I fear hoak him, and yet I cannot forbear comne upon him with them in this Cafe, be and a Matter of Fact cannot be otherwise Attered than by Names and Authority ). and whereas this Author is pleased to add pon this, that the Stories of Simon Mawould not prejudice the Caufe he has taken in hand, though allowed True, as other Hiftorical Narrations "! Perhaps he nay fay hereafter, the Caufe he has taken n hand is Christ's Religion; and I grant the igns, which this Impostor shewed, do not t all Prejudice that, because his very Oppomg it, obligeth that he be concluded not to e of God, and not to have His Power for he Acts he did! But I am fure it shall be Prejudice to this Author's Notion which he as taken upon him to Maintain; i. e. that false Christs and False Prophets shall never fork Miracles; and that no Impostor shall ork them, that shall go about to prove hat Jesus was not the Christ; for this Imoffer, 'tis certain, set himself up to be the brist; and if the Stories of him be True, id shew Signs to make himself believed the reat One he gave himself out to be.

5

.

0

h

15

a-

ed

or

ed

er

ed

to

OIL

I must

n

E

t

tl

go u b

h

to

Se

te

ň

m

ar

po

M

In

他工品

Dilai

m

gi

W

ar

re

I must say then now to our Author's Scholar, who comes to fum up what he has been taught, That his Instructor has indeed proved that Christ actually wrought Mira. cles ( as was foretold he should ) and that the End for which he wrought them, was to gain Belief and Credit with the World; but he has been now shewn also what his Tutor had omitted; namely, That Christ also proved his Power by which he did his Works, to be the Spirit and Power of God-And therefore it can be no necessary Confe. quence, that neither Men nor Devils shall be able to work Miracles in Opposition to the Gospel: The Scripture on the contrary has foretold they shall, but required that we reject them and their Works, as not having their Power from God, And inalmuch as his Tutor has taught him, that he must not deny that Spirits have great Sagacity, Force and Subtilty, nor fay they cannot do most strange and astonishing Things or even affift Men in the performance of amazing Works; I do not fee how he can be able to stand by it, that they can do to Miracles. It must be allowed, that Miracles. Miracles. cles are of the Foundation upon which Go has built and established the Religion taugh by his Son Jesus Christ; but however the are but part of the Foundation; the Scrip tures, Moses and the Prophets must be take in to make up the Foundation. So the not

notwithstanding what the Scripture saith of Evil Spirits, and Evil Men by their Affistance, shewing great Signs, thereby endeavouring to subvert the Truth of the Gospel, that Truth however will stand Firm upon a good and fure Foundation, as established upon the Miracles of Christ, which have been shewn to have been wrought by the Spirit of God, and have the witness of a Precedent Revelation. And therefore he has been very ill Taught, when he has been fold that he must not admit the received Sense of these Passages of Scripture, (which the words most plainly require to be admitted, and upon which himself owns he cannot find how to put any certain nor determinate Sense otherways) for the sake of an inconsistency thought to be in the Suppolition of Two contrary Powers working Miracles; there being indeed no real Inconsistency nor Contradiction therein; the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, which suppose this, supposing the Power of God superior to all Power of the Devil in works of this kind, and his Revelation established upon Evidence and Demonstration of his Power in the works that give Witness to his Truth; which is suppofed particularly in the Notice and Forewarning that Christ hath given us of the arising of False Prophets, who hath requifed nothing unreasonable, in obliging us to

T.e.

1at

10t

raf-

he

ga-

an-

igs,

e of

Can D B

(ira

God

ugh the

Crip

aker

tha

not

reject them; that is to fay, fince he has proved himself to be of God, we should not hearken to False Pretenders that never will be able to prove themselves nor their Works to be from him. And as to the Things that are told of Simon Magus, he has feen that his Instructor's Argument to prove that he wrought no Miracles, is come to nothing, and consequently the Facts that are report. ed of him do absolutely overthrow his No. tion, and prove the Prediction of Christ literally fulfilled; that according as he foretold there should, there did arise a False Christ and False Prophets, that shewed great Signs and Wonders to deceive.

I might now take my leave of this Author, as being not concerned on the Account of the Opinion I hold concerning Miracles, to go further with him. For the Objection of Miracles being wrought among the Gentiles, will not lye hard at all upon that Opinion which supposes they may be wrought by another Power than that of God. However, lest this Author should think his Book not fully Answered, if I should not keep on with him; but especially that Religion may not be left upon that Issue, upon which he has put the Merits of its Caufe, I shall go on with him to the

end of his Book And And and

falls Prophets, who hath requid nothing unrealonable, in obliging us to

-

451

LS t 1

S

ıt

lè

0ift

ne

Se

at

nt

es,

on

ennat

be

of

uld

fI

eci-

pon rits

the

Is

In the next place then we meet with Two Questions; namely, (1st.) "How are " Miracles a Proper Way of Attesting to "the Truth of any Messenger or Prophet " of God, - when Miracles have been Pag. 115. "certainly wrought in all Ages by Men "that were no Prophets, nor pretended to "come from God? And (2dly,) What "must be done with all the Miracles that "were wrought by Gentiles before the com-"ing of Christ, and by Gentiles since his " coming? The first of these Questions this Author could have had little to do with, but that he defignedly brought it in, to have an Opportunity to amuse his Reader in the Answer he gives to it; and make believe there must be some great Matter in the Inference he makes upon it, which is to help himself out, that he may seem to say something to the Second Question, which we shall find he has cut himself off from being able to give a fufficient Answer to, by his false Hypothesis, that supposes all Miracles to be wrought by the Power of God, and that no other Power can work them; (which Supposition does certainly lay him under the greatest Difficulty in accounting for the Miracles among the Heathen.) But to speak at present concerning the first of these Questions: 'Tis plain this Author could have little to do to ask it; for supposing Miracles to have been wrought by Men that S 3

46

"

-

46

46

"

п

2

ol

to

d

b

ir

ol tl

win

W

to

cl

S

te

R

I

th "

were no Prophets, nor pretended to come from God, yet this being certain that they could not be wrought by Men of themselves (without the affiltance of some Invisible Power, and according to this Author, not without the affiftance of God himself) there could not possibly be any thing in this to argue Miracles improper to attest the Truth of any Messenger or Prophet of God: For though there would be no Reason for those to be accounted Prophets upon the account of their having wrought Miracles, who pretended not to prophelie; nor those Messengers who should not pretend to come with any Message; yet there would be always Reason for those to be believed, who should fay at any time they were Messengers and Prophets, if so be they wrought Miracles by the Power of God: For as 'tis certain from hence that God is with them, they must be believed when they speak to us from him, or in his Name; but when they do not bring us any Message, then 'tis to be supposed their Power of Miracles might be for some other end. In the Answer therefore that this Author gives, as to "God's

Effay, p. 116.

"doing whatever he does for wife Ends and "Purposes, though he does not always discover them to Men; and his working Miracles sometimes without declaring his "Purpose, and his Purpose being then estimes times times"

S

e

e

0

h

re

it

h

ld

nd

es

ey

m

be

be

red's

nd

lif-

Ai-

his

ef-

ne-

nes

"times working them, and declaring the "End for which he works them, and their "then attaining their End, and we know it. "And again, of God's working fome Mira-"cles, we know not why, but he does; and "other some, telling us it is to give Credit "to them by whom he works them, and " for these Works sake we do give credit to "those Messengers." In all this, I say, there is nothing but amusement; for Common Sense must tell all Mankind, that tho' a Man work Miracles, yet we are under no obligation of necessity of believing that Man to have a Message from God, who does not declare to us, and tell us that he has any; but we shall have Reason to think that God intended this Power of Miracles for some other Purpose, if we are not told it was for this; but if ever we are told by him that wrought them, that it was to attest his coming from God, and we are fure that God was with him in the Work, it shall oblige us to believe him whenever we are told thereof, let it be before his working these Miracles that he tells us his Message, or after : So that after all that this Author has pretended to fay here, there is not one jot of Reason for that which under colour of this Talk he feeks to bring in; that is to fay, that it should be "necessary that a Prophet "declare his Commission before hand, and "then work his Miracle; shew the Seal, as " he

b

th

fo

b

C

h

"

44

66

t

h

ag

if

N

A

if

"he calls it, of his Commission." Which for a Purpose of his own this Author would advance into a Rule, (as we shall fee by and by) and put the Cause of Religion upon it. whereas in truth there is no manner of Reafon in any Thing that he has faid, or can fay to infer it ; neither would there be any manner of certainty in the Rule, if there were any Grounds to lay it down. Yes, there is a plain Reason for it ( fays this Author) in that we hear of a world of Min racles that have been done by men in all A ges, who have pretended to no Commission from God, nor to be fent at all by him This will be a Reafon indeed why those that are Prophets should tell us they have a Mesfage from God, or we are under no necessity of thinking them Prophets; but it can be no Reason that they must tell us what they are before they work their Miracles; if they do it after, their Miracles give them the same credit as if they had done it before, their Works shew them to be from God, and this must be to us a Reason at any time to be lieve them. But this (our Author fays) "would prevent all Abuses that might be "made of accidental Miracles, which it "pleases God to work now and then, we "know not why, and by Agents or Instruments that knew nothing of the matter "before the Miracle." Perhaps it might, if there were any danger of this kind; and I may

I may let it for this purpose be kept till there be need of it; as yet I do not fee, however, that this Author has shewn us any occasion for it : But much stress, I am afraid, cannot be laid upon it in any case; For how may any Miracles be faid to be accidental, when they cannot be wrought without God, who has always wife Ends and Purposes therein? How can I pretend to fay to any Agent of his, -" Had you first said to me, that you "came from God, and to convince me of " it, had told me God would work a Mira-" cle to witness your Commission, this Mi-"racle had been a Seal of it, and then I "must have believed it; but now I may as "well fay (the Miracle being wrought be-"fore your telling the Message) you take "occasion from this Event to come upon "your own Errand, as you say it testifies "you came from God? Certainly this Auther is not ferious, and in earnest, when he pretends that a Speech of this kind would have been good in the Mouth of Pharaoh against Moses, had he not told his Errand first, before he wrought his Miracles: For if a Reasoning of this kind might hold, it would be an Objection against the Truth of Moses's Revelation: It might be said he was indeed the Messenger of God for the Deliry of this People out of Ægypt, for this, Errand he told before he wrought his Miracles, and they prove him fent for this purpose; but

1

t

n

d

()

e

e

ler

id

y

but they prove him not to be fent to the People of Ifrael as a Law-giver, for that he did not at first speak of this Errand; it may be faid therefore as well that he took occafion from the Event designed by God for another purpose, to get himself an Authority, which God never intended to give him, in and by those Works: There had consequently been no Authority in his Message to the People of Ifrael, Exod. 19. 4, and 7. when he laid before their faces these Words of the Lord; namely, Te have feen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on Eagles Wings, and brought you unto my self; now therefore if ye will obey my Voice indeed, and keep my Covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar Treasure unto me, above all People,&c. Upon which the People answered together, and faid, - All that the Lord bath Spoken we will do. An Answer certainly reasonable in it felf, and reasonably expected by God, and by his Prophet, upon the Miracles they had feen wrought; though before this time they had not been told of this Purpose there-With what pretence can any Man prefume to deny a Prophet the Liberty, if he thinks fit, to shew the Seal of his Commission first, and prove it Authentick, before he tells us the Contents of that Commission? What can be faid, if a Messenger of God should reply, upon so weak and irreverent an Answer as that of this Author before-mentioned,

b

k

t

n

P

ir

al

a

T

hi

W

33

"

"

"

"

tioned; "Tis not for you to pretend that I come on my own Errand, whenas you cannot deny but that God has been with me in the Works which I have shewn; Who is to tell you the Purpose of God in these Works, if I am not? From whom can you have a Knowledge of God's Purpose therein, but from him whom God has enabled to work them? And, as God must know before his enabling me to work them, to what purpose I would use them; you may be fure that I should not have had Power from him to work them, if I would abuse them to contrary Purposes, to other Purposes than what he intended? I cannot in the least apprehend, that there could be any Reason to stand out in such a Case, against such a Prophet and his Miracles. And therefore this can be no Rule for the Trial of a Prophet, nor for the Refusal of his Message. But this Author observes, it was our Lord's Method, who is faid Mat. 4. 23. "to have gone about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching " the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all "manner of Sickness, and all manner of "Diseases among the People. He first "(fays he) declared the Purpose of his coming, and laid down his Pretences in the general; and then convinced them by Miracles, He was the Person he said he was, and was to be believed." I would willing-

1

.

a

10

n

d

10

e-

e-

ne

Ti-

he

1?

bc

nt

n-

willingly observe all that is remarkable in our Lord's Method, and make the best Use of all Things therein I could, to prove that our Lord's Miracles ought to have Credit with me and with the World : But whatever Help this might give me, together with other Arguments, that the strict Observa. tion of his Method might give me for this purpose; I should be very unwilling to put the Cause of Religion, and the Credit of our Lord upon this Issue alone; because of fome scurvy Objections that I foresee might be made, which would very much perplex me. Namely, (1st.) That Christ had not told what Person he was, not so much as to his own Disciples, in a great while after he begun his Preaching and flewing his Works. For we find, Mat. 16. v. 16. when Peter professed him to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, he fays, Flesh and Blood had not revealed this to him, but his Father which was in Heaven; that is to fay, he spake it by the Spirit of God: And this mult imply, that our Lord had not before plainly told what Person he was; and when he now owns who he was, he charges his Dilciples that they should tell no man, that he was Jesus the Christ, v. 20. I find also, (2dly.) That our Lord himself first wrought a Miracle, without telling any thing of his Purpose therein, in the Cure of him that was born blind, John 9. and afterwards meets

1

t

VAL

aSh

a

M

r

to

N

22

V

n

r

n

L

u

e

t

t

r

h

1-

is

ut

of

of

ht

ex

ot

to

he

KS.

ter

of

ood

ber

he

ust

in-

he

)if-

he

160,

ght

his

hat

irds eets meets the Man, and acquaints him who he was, and requires his Faith, v. 35- and the Man believes immediately. Now I can never think, that our Lord would have expected to be believed, for his Miracle that he had wrought, without telling his Purpose, in so great a Matter as this; i. e. his being the Son of God; or would ever have given himself an Instance that might be drawn into Consequence against himself; if it were necessary, as this Author would pretend, that he should first have told the Man who he was, before he had wrought his Miracle, if his Miracle were to have been the Ground of his Belief; or if this would be a Means of any Certainty, to find out a false Prophet by. I take notice also of St. Peter's Miracle, when John was with him, in his Curing the Man that lay lame at the Temple-gate, Acts 3. 2. that he first wrought the Miracle, and when the People ran together greatly wondring, he spake unto them, and infifted upon the Miracle, as wrought in the Name, through faith in the name of Jesus. I moreover, (3dly.) am aware of another Objection that would press me very hard, if I was to maintain the Truth of Christianity upon this Ground; namely, Christ's absolute Resusal at some times to work a Sign, when the Jews called upon him to do it; and his giving them Signs at other times which they understood not,

WI

wl

Re

bil

de

W

bu

H

P

ai

m

H

S

b

P

P

C

t

C

t

l l

not. Of the first kind was that, Mark 8. 12. when the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a Sign from Heaven; Verily, (fays he) no Sign shall be given to this Generation; and he left them, &c. Of the Second Kind was his Reply to the Jews, John 2. v. 18. when they asked him, What Sign fhewest thou? Destroy this Temple, (fays he) and in three days I will build it up; which they understood of the Temple of Jerusalem, whereas he spake of the Temple of his Body. Which Sign of his, we are told, was not perfectly understood of his own Disciples, till they remembred his Words, after he was risen from the dead. And again, when he put off the Scribes and Pharifees, when they defired to fee a Sign from him, with this Answer, Mat. 12. 38. An evil and adulterous Generation feeketh after a Sign, and there shall no Sign be given it, but that of the Prophet Jonas; not explaining to them, or at least but very darkly, what he meant by that Sign. And when again, at another time, he put off both the Pharifees and Sadducees with the like Answer, without any Explanation thereof at all; but left them, and departed from them, Mat. 16. 4. I take thefe things in themselves, to be no Objections of any moment against our Saviour Christ, or his Miracles; who has himself furnished us with n

)

d

١.

n

S

e

of

is

d.

es.

-

e

y

h

e

if

n

n

Ÿ

is

15

with an Argument, that will answer it wholly, Luke 4. v. 250 when he gives a Reason for his not working Miracles in Gablee, as he did at Capernaum, viz. Many Widows were in Ifrael in the days of Elias, when the great Famine was in the Land; but unto none of them was he fent, fave unto the Widow at Sarepta: And many Lepers were in Ifrael in the days of Elifeus, and none of them was cleanfed, faving Naaman the Syrian: That is to fay, it is, and must be allowed to be wholly in the Pleafure of God, what Signs he will shew, and before whom, and also at what time he will please to do them. I durst not therefore pretend to day down, neither can I think any Man ought to lay down, a Rule for God's doing his Miracles; to determine of the Credit which is to be given to his Miracles, or any Persons working them by his Power, from a Rule of my own framing; though it may feemingly appear never fo fair and reasonable to my Apprehension; if I cannot be fure that it is a Rule given me by God, to distinguish his Works, and to know those that come from him. For tho' I may think it never fo fair and reasonable, or necessary, it is not for me to confine God to any Method of ours: And if that were to be, it may be another Man shall not think this Method reasonable; he may therefore defire Satisfaction in the way that he thinks thinks most propert And authird Person (perhaps) may not diflike the Method which I think fair, but yet may think fome! thing elfe wanting, that to him feems altol gether as reasonable : As a few, for Instance may oppose and fay, That he approves of this, that the Doctrine be laid down first and then the Miracle to confirm it ; but he likes also, that a Sign should be given him at his own time, when he pleafes to call for it; which Christ thought not fit to do. Another might pretend, that he did indeed fliew Signs before the Common People, but he did not do it before their Rulers, who were best capable of judging in such Man ters; or, if he did any before some of these, he refused it when they were in Confulr together, and defired to fee it done for their Satisfaction, when they were prepared, and could best have consider d'it. And at this rate, a man might find Objections e nough that would be made to him, of Things, as reasonable in human Judgment, that were omitted, as those can be, which we may infift upon to have been done. Se hazardous a thing is it, to put the Cause of Religion upon a Ground and Foundation of our own, and not upon the Rule which God has given us to judge of his Works, and of the Power of those that pretend to come to us in his Name. Every thing of this kind of our own Invention, instead of preventing and

in

r

ni

ou h and excluding Abuses, and undue Advantages, does indeed rather give them to crafty and pretending People. I have always thought and observed, that what the Wife Men of the World have been apt to look apon as Fooliffines in the Proceedings of God, has been above all the Wildom of Men, and will appear always above it, will gain its Point against their Wisdom: Whereas, if we go about to oppose our own Wifdom, to the Wifdom of the Scribe and Dibuter of this World, Religion and its

thereby. M

5

n

1,

1-

10

us of

18

nd

I may therefore allow, in one Sense, this Author's Diffinction of Miracles, into Providential and Evidential; that is to fay, Providential; such as God himself worketh in the way of his Providence; and Evidenful, fuch as are wrought by Men, as the instruments of God. For I think the Scriture does give us a Ground to think, that God of himfelf worketh Wonders fomeimes, as well as that he gives of his Powto Men for doing it. Of the first Kind take to be the Flood in Noah's days, which fowned all the World; and the Destruction of the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with Fire and Brimstone; and several more ound in Sacred, and (perhaps) in Prohane Story of the like kind. These are the the Works of God only, and give no other Evidence than to his Providence; and the Justice and Righteousness thereof. That can only (or properly at least) be understood to give Evidence to a Man as God's Melfenger, wherein God hearkeneth to the voice of Man: But for all those that have been at any time wrought by Men, I fee nothing in the Scripture to conclude, but that they are all Evidential in a strict Sense; that is to fay, they are always an Evidence of some invilible Power affifting those Men to do fuch Works, which (as Men) they could not otherwise do: And if such Men make it appear, that their Power is from God, it is an Evidence which may at any time be made use of, when they shall think fit to demand our Belief. We may ask, if you will, by what Power, or by what Name, fuch Miracles were done; and this any Man may be put upon making out; but when he has made out his Power, it can never be any Right of ours, to infift upon what we think the fairest way for our satisfaction.

And for the other thing that this Author here suggests, viz. the True Prophet's knowing before-hand what he should work; there may be some good Use made of it, I believe, if it be not carried too far; if it be used, that is to say, as one of the Arguments we have for the Truth of Christ's Miracles, that he knew before-hand what he

would

2

re

0

de

th

N

th

le

bo

he

W

ca

would do; but (I doubt) it will not bear, that the whole Stress of the Cause of Religion be laid upon it. Let it be opposed to, and vanquish (as it certainly will) all false Prophets, whose Power has found a Stop, and has been put to that Stop in a Competition; but then the Argument in it carries a Supposition with it, which this Author has denied; namely, That other Powers beside God may work Miracles, whilft he permits them fo to do; but can do nothing, when he shall controul them. But if you take away this Supposition, and were to conclude, as this Author has done, that all Miracles are wrought by the Power of God; there could be no ground in Reason hence, as (I am fure) there is none in Scripture, to void the Evidence of Miracles, in any Case, wherein the Workers of them may require to be believed. For what if a Worker of fuch Miracles (as this Author calls accidental) should say, he knew his Power, though he did not tell us that he knew it? What if he should take upon him to say, that the Power that affifted him, would not let him discover his Intention of doing it before-hand? What if he should say, that he did not know any thing of it when it was done indeed; but that the Spirit which came upon him at that time, to affift him to do this, which he did not know he should be able to do, had now revealed to him for what T 2

ın

ne

2-

We

hor

et's

rk:

fit

Ar-

ift's

at he

ould

what Purpose it assisted him? What have we to fay in any of these Cases? 'Tis plain therefore, that this Rule leaves the Matter at fuch Uncertainty, that we could be ne.

ver the better for it.

Effay, p. 120.

Let us fee now, what this Author will do with the other "Question, concerning the " Miracles of the Heathens: Are we to be " lieve they were wrought indeed; and if " fo, what must we think they were "wrought for?" It should have been asked also, by what Power must we think them wrought ? But that's a Question this Author did not care to meddle with; but would have it concluded to be the Power of God, without any Reason given. In his

Answer, therefore, he tells us, " It is not Pag. 123. "to be thought, that all their Histories of strange Deliverances, and Cures report-

" ed to be done among them, are meer Lie " and Fictions, though many of them may

f

a

I

d

(

t

b

Pt

a

C

k

" be so: It must not be denied therefore,

"however, that Miracles have been wrought "among the Heathens." And he thus ac-

counts for them. "First, 'tis probable, Pag. 121. ( (he fays) that God hath in all Age

"wrought some Miracles, without regard to bearing Testimony to any particular

"Truth or Messenger; but meerly to attell "his Providence, and Government of the

"World. And, Secondly, (he fays) it " may please God sometimes to work Mira u cles n,

er

be

)e-

if

ere

ed

nk

his

out

ver

his

not

ries

ort

ies

nay

ore,

ight

ac-

ble

lges

gard

ular

ttest

the

) it

Tira-

cles

"cles, purely for the Benefit of some par-" ticular Persons, without any Respect had " to the Confirmation of any Truth or Mef-" fage; it being in his Nature to be good " and merciful to all his Creatures; and " there being many Cases that may happen, "that may call for a Miraculous and strange " Assistance at his hands, such as he in pi-"ty may think fit to relieve after a Mira-" culous Manner." In all this there is not one Tittle of Argument, to prove the Miracles reported among the Heathen, to have been wrought by the Power of God. A Man, that believes that fuch as were wrought among them, were wrought by the Devil, (who deluded them to the worst of Idolalatries) may fay the very fame things that he has done, to account for God's Permiffion of the Devil to do fuch Works among them: Namely, that as God permitted this, so he served himself thereof, by keeping up amongst all Mankind an Apprehension of a Divine Power, and the Belief of a Providence. And this shall be a Reason, for God's Permission of Satan, by his Power, to do Miraculous Cures upon poor, miserable, deluded Wretches; of whom it might please God to have some Compassion as to their Bodies as well as their Souls, winking at their Ignorance, until the time that, he called all Men to Repentance, and the Acknowledgment of his Truth. And whe-T 3 ther ther is most probable, that the Miracles a.

mong them were done by the Power of God, or by the Power of the Devil, I shall leave the World to judge from the Account we have in Scripture of the Devil's Power, and of his ruling and working in the Gentile Ephef. 2. World, and from the Idolatrous Worship that obtained throughout the same, and the Devil's dwelling in the Heathen Temples, and answering in their Oracles. But this Author says, "God, who is Lord and King " of all the World, hath not fo tyed him-" self to either Jew or Christian, but that " he often hath, still does, and always will " dispense great Favours to the Gentiles also; " and, where he finds Occasion, " great Wonders for and with them. That God has tyed himself up from shewing Favours, or even doing Wonders for the Gentiles, or with them, where he finds occafion, I suppose no one does pretend: But where is it that this Author shews us the Occasion; and whence is it that he prefumes to tell us what God will do? How does he prove, that God has not ferved his Occasion, or may not serve his Occasion, by the Miracles that he worketh by and with his own Prophets and Servants? How is it that he taketh upon him to speak of

himself, concerning the Mind and Will of God; and to assign him the Instruments he shall use? He may, without doubt, use

what

of

all

nt

er,

ile

ip

he

s,

115

ng

n-

at

0;

rk

nat

:4-

ut

he

re-

n, nd

W

of

of

he

ise

lat

what Instruments he pleaseth; but this does not prove, that he will use those as his Instruments in Works of Wonder and Power, who are Worshippers of false and Idol Gods, and pretend their Power from thefe. There can be no manner of Reason to think fuch the Instruments of the True God in any Works wrought by them: Much less Reason is there to think, as to those Works that are reported of their Deities and Idols, and to have been done in their Temples, that these should be otherwise done than by the Power of Satan. If any Miracles among them may reasonably be imputed to God, as Lord and King of all the World, it can be only those that come to pass in the way of God's general Providence; wherein are fometimes feen strange, unusual, and assonishing Events, extraordinary Things, and Alterations in the Course of Nature. These are rightly judged to be the Works of God all the World over, and are an Attestation of his Providence; and their End is rightly thought to be, the keeping up a Sense of God's Being, Power, and Goodness in Mens Hearts; and being Providential Works, are no Evidence of the Truth of one Religion more than another. But the Miraculous Works which the Heathens infift upon, as wrought by their Idol Deities, and for which they report Affistances to have been had and found in their Superstition, are of of another Nature, are Special Works, wherein it appeareth, that the Gods have hearkened to the Voice of Men, and given

them; at their Defire, special Assistance and

W

ric

us

co

W

th

25

te

Help for the doing them: Wherein the Prefence and Power of the Gods, appeareth to have been with fuch Men; which is reafonably esteem'd an Approbation of their Service and Way of Worship. To suppose, therefore God the Author of these kind of Works among the Heathen, is to suppose him an Approver of their Idolatrous Superstition, and must really destroy that Evidence which is given by the Presence of his Spirit and Power to his True Religion, Indeed, thus much is in effect confessed by this Author, when he tells us "what oc-Pag. 125. " casioned the cunninger Sort of Gentiles to "fpread abroad among the Vulgar, that " other People wrought Miracles, as well " as Christ and Christians; that the Pre-"tence of Miracles, which was made by "Christians, might not be sufficient to with-"draw them from their Ancient Universal "Worship of many Gods. They could " not deny (he fays) that Christ and Chri-" stians wrought great and many Miracles, " nor could they deny the Natural Force of " fuch an Argument; unless they could op-" pose Miracles wrought by their own Peo-" ple, to the Miracles of Christ and Chri-"flians; for then they must fignify no-" thing

Effay,

"thing on either fide, or as much on "theirs, as on the Christian side." If this were a Temptation to them to invent Stories more than were true (as this Author tells us) 'tis plain they thought it a Natural Argument, that if God affisted them to work Miracles, as he did the Christians, they could be under no necessity to leave their Superstition: And inasmuch as notwithflanding their telling many Stories that were false, it is not, however, to be denied that many of their Miracles were true, then I fear this Author's own Argument will be good against himself; that Miracles being confessedly wrought on either side, they must signifie nothing, or as much on theirs as on the Christian. This will be no Objection of force however, to those that suppose two different Powers working Miracles, and can give a manifest Reason why that with Christians should be thought the Power of God, and why that with the other is to be accounted only the Power of the Devil. But what has this Author, who supposes both to be of God, to answer in the Case to his own Argument that he hath put into the Heathens Mouth? What he hath to fay, is, that "all those Miracles of the Heathen were Essay, "Providential Miracles, and were not p. 124.

<sup>&</sup>quot;wrought either in opposition to, or con-"firmation of any Doctrine or way of Wor-"hip, and therefore could be of no advan-

"tage to the Heathen Cause, nor disadvan"tage to the Christian." To this an Heathen might reply, That Miracles are as well Evidential with them as with Christians, they look upon them to be Consirmations of their Religion, as well as Christians think them so of theirs, and have as much Reason to account them Evidences of God's approving Men that worship him in their Fashion, as others can have to reckon them Evidences of his approving the Christian Worship. So precarious are our Author's Deep Thoughts in this Point.

But he has an Answer at large to put into the Christian's Mouth, which might have been faid and used to stop the Mouths of the Heathen formerly, and which he will now at least adventure to lay down as the furest and most reasonable way of defending Christianity against all Exceptions, as to the Evidence of its Miracles; namely, "He is not " to fay that the Doctrine of Christ is True, " because it has pleased God to work Mira-"cles by, and among Christians. For then he could not fay, the Gentile Worship is false, fince it must be allowed, that it hath pleased God to work Miracles also by and among the Gentiles: But he is to fay, "That "the Doctrine of Christ is true, because he " faid he came from God, and was to teach "his Will; and in confirmation of the Truth "of his coming from God, and of what he should

" should deliver, he said he had Power to " work Miracles, and he did accordingly "work great and many Miracles." And he is to fay moreover, "That the Gentile "Theology and Way of Worship are not "built on, nor supported by the Miracles "that have been wrought by, and among "the Gentiles, because they who wrought "them, pretended not to be fent from God, " nor came to fet up any particular Way of "Worship, nor knew that they should be " able to work any Miracles, nor affirmed " at any time, upon the Credit of those Mi-" racles, that Christianity was not the True "Religion." I think if a Man would have defignedly, but covertly, and clandestinely given up the Cause of the Christian Religion, he could not have talked at a more loose or idle rate : A Christian, according to him, " may not Say, that the Doctrine of Christ " is True, because it has pleased God to work " Miracles by and among Christians: What is become then of the Witness which God gave thereto by Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost? Heb. 2. 4. What becomes of our Saviour's Prediction, Mark 16. v. 17. And these Signs shall follow them that believe, In my Name shall they cast out Devils? &c. and especially of his Saying, John 14. V. 11, 12. when having required that himself might be believed for his Works Sake, he adds, Verily, he that

e,

n

15

d

at

10

h

ch

10

that believeth in me, the Works that I do shall he do also, and greater Works than these shall be do, because I go unto the Father? &c. I thought our Lord had herein foretold as well that these Signs were to be Evidences of the Truth of his Religion, when they came to pass; as that they should come to pass through the Power of God, and Prefence of his Spirit with his Church. let us go on to this Author's Reason; For then he could not say the Gentile "Worship is false, since it must be allowed that " it bath pleased God to work Miracles also by " and among the Gentiles." I would fain know by what Authority this Author makes this Concession, as to God's working Miracles by and among the Gentiles; Does he find it made by any of the Apostles, or first Christians? Does he find the least Thing in Scripture to countenance what he thus boldly afferts? Sure I am, there is no Reason given by him, that should oblige any man to think otherwise than what the first Christians thought, as to the miraculous Works among the Idolatrous Heathen, that they were the Effects of the Devil's Cunning and Power. But an Heathen, I suppose, would gladly take him at his Word, and we shall fee what work he may make of it anon. A Christian, however, has this to say, according to our Author, " the Doctrine of " Christ is True, because he said he came " from

" from God, and was to teach his Will; and " in confirmation of the Truth of his com-"ing from him, and of what he should de-" liver, he faid he had Power to work Mi-"racles, and did accordingly. So that the whole stress of the Matter, so far as I can find, is put upon this Point, that Christ told his Doctrine first, and then wrought his Miracles; so that the Lifue depends not fo much upon his Miracles, as upon his first laying down his Doctrine; (a flender and flight Foundation, I doubt, but shall suspend 'till I fee what is to be faid further.) On the other hand, a Christian has to fay, That the Gentile Theology and Way of Worship are not built on, or Supported by the Miracles that have been wrought by, and among the Gentiles. Why fo? Because they who wrought them, pretended not to be Sent of God, nor came to fet up any particular Way of Worship, nor knew that they should be able to work Miracles, nor affirmed at any time upon the Credit of those Miracles, that Christianity was not the True Religion. This Author would have done well to have instructed the Unlearned Christian how to make good all those Particulars, which I find my felf as unable to undertake, as to undertake the Task of difproving all the Gentile Histories and Accounts, Pag. 135. which he would by no means have his Friend to adventure on: In the mean time I am atterly at a loss, should a Gentile or unbelieving

Lastere,

h

lieving Heathen reply, and fay, This is for the greatest part, if not all, Mistake, for we have had Oracles and Prophecies that have foretold Bleffings to us, upon our fetching and worshipping this, and that, and the other God; we have had particular Sacrifices preferibed to us by them; we have had Cures wrought in the Temples of these Gods, and Visions likewise there: Our Priests of these high Gods, who have instructed us in their Worship, (which Worship we find accepted by the Power the Gods shew with us, in Miraculous Works therein) tell us, That your Religion is false, and setteth forth strange Gods, ours the Ancient and True. Your Answerers heretofore pretended, that the Works wrought among us, were wrought by Devils; but you now rightly contess them to be the Power of God. And what Reason is there, that God who has shewn us so much kindness as to do so many mighty Works among us, should not by some or other of those to whom he has given the Power of Miracles among our felves, instruct us in the True Way of his Worship? Would he do us so much kindness in reference to our Bodies, and withhold that wherein our Souls are concerned, and not fend us a Prophet of our own to instruct us? Is it reasonable that we should for sake those Deities that have been fo manifestly and miraculously kind to us, because others pretend

pretend to have Miracle-Workers that tell them ours is a false Way, whenas we have those also that work Miracles, who tell us no fuch thing? Nor is it to be faid, that ours knew not that they should be able to work Miracles; for we also have had those that have foretold them, as the Augur (that gave this as a Sign to the Roman King, that what he had in his Thoughts was possible to be done; who thereupon proposed a Thing to appearance most impossible, which was the dividing and cutting afunder a Whetstone with a Razor that lay by it, and the Augur immediately performed it) and feveral others. Tis endless to say, what might have been objected to this Defence of the Christian Religion, had it been stood upon by Christians of old, when the Gentile Idolatry prevailed in the World, and Satan by Permission was doing his utmost to keep up that Idolatry and Superstition: Or what might be objected even now by the Atheistical and Prophane, if Religion stood upon this Bottom: The Foundation at this rate being little other than a Nicety, and the Christian World never understanding upon what Ground it stood before. It is therefore to me a most unaccountable thing, that this should be laid down as the surest and most reasonable way of defending Christianity from all Exceptions as to the Evidence of its Miracles.

But now our Author's Scholar comes upon him with an Objection indeed sitis pity but he had been able to manage it to advantage for then I am apt to think it must have put this Author very hard to it, and made him perhaps, look after fome better Answer than his distinction of Miracles into Providential and Evidencial. The Objection is, the Mil racles wrought by Vespasian the Emperor, who cured the Blind and the Lame, astwo Historians of Credit relate, viz: Suctonius and Tacitus . The Cafe is here not fo fair ly told, and I shall therefore put it in Tacitus's Words, who fays, A Man of Alexandria that had an Infirmity and Difease in his Eyes, came to the Emperor, and told him, the God Serapis (which in that Country was much worshipped and honoured above all other) had warned him to come to him for Cure, and prayed the Remedy of him which the God had advised, that he would vouchfafe to touch the Balls of his Eyes with his Spittle: The other being lame, came to him by the Direction of the fame God, and prayed, that he would kick him with his Foot: Vefpasian did not think he should do the Cure, and so was at first unwilling to try; but being encouraged by fome about him, at length attempted it, and the Event answered, and so he had the Success that had been foretold. I agree with our Author in what he fays, (First) to this

ft

C

in

this Case, that it looks as if it had been in part transcribed from our Saviour's Action in curing the Blind: And likewise in his (Second) Observation concerning it, that it feems an Artifice of Vespasian's Friends and Followers, to raise his Credit with the World, now he put for the Empire; and it looks fuspiciously that they should importune him to do what he was ashamed himself to ttempt; it looks as if the Matter had been aid before-hand by them, that feem'd to varrant the Success: But in the (Third) I annot go with him fo far as to believe the Relation very readily upon the Credit of hose Authors: For Tacitus says himself, hat he had it but upon Credit and Report, e indeed gives fomething of a Reason vhy they should be believed from whom he ad it, viz. Those who saw the Action do now ffirm it, when nothing is to be got by lying the Case: However, it is the Credit of hers, and not Tacitus, that we must depend n for the Truth of the Fact. And which worse, the Historians differ in their Relaon thereof. Suetonius fays the Lame Man as debilis crure, had a Weakness in his Ane: Tacitus that he was manu æger, had a ameness in his Hand: One says, upon e Event, the Man had the use of his Hand stored; and the other, the Man's Ankle came strong. This difference is some Ariment to me, that there was no great Certainty

Ý

9

n

n

d

es

ne

m

he

in-

by

it,

he

ree

to

his

tainty in the Story. I say withal, that should we admit it however, it affects not the Cause in hand, (if by that be meant the Cause of Religion) upon the Grounds on which I think the Cause of that to depend; but I doubt it will very much affect this Author's Principles, and the Cause of Religion too, if that were to stand upon those Principles.

"Vespassian (says our Author) according to the Forms prescribed, was instrumental in restoring a Blind and Lame Man:

"He was so far from knowing himself endu"ed with any such Power, that he did not

"believe it, when told him from Serapis:
"He durst not so much as try to follow

"the Forms prescribed him for those Works. True, but still Serapis sent the Blind and Lame to him, directed the Means, the Thing was attempted, and the Event sollowed: "To whom consequently was the

"Cure in Reason to be ascribed, but to the "Emperor, as the Instrument, and to the

"Power of the God that directed it? And that which our Author fays afterwards,—"He

"pretended to nothing of Divine Worship

"when he had actually performed them; he made no Consequences, nor defired any

"to be made, but that which would natu-"rally follow, that the People should hold

"the Man in great Honour, who was so sa"voured of the Gods:" is not altogether

fo true; for Tacitus says, That the Em-Tacit. peror upon it had a greater desire to go to the Temple of Serapis, and worship there, and consult with that God about his Empire: And as the Emperor made that Inference, 'tis evident he thought himself as sisted by the Power of that God to do the Work; and no doubt, but as others must think the same, the Worship of this Idol was by this promoted amongst the People.

1-

ot

:

W

IS.

nd

he

ol-

he

he

the

hat

He

hip

; he

any

atu-

rold

fa-

ther

I am fo far therefore from perceiving that this was a " Providential Miracle that God "was pleased to work by Vespasian, without "any knowledge of, or Pretences to fuch "Power before-hand, and without any In-" ferences drawn from it afterwards;" that I take it to be plainly the contrary. It's a Miracle that an Idol-God directed the Means for, and in effect foretold, and which confequently it's reasonable to think the Idol gave Power for, to the Instrument that wrought it: And it's unreasonable to think the True God should employ his Power to bring that Thing to pass, to verifie the Prediction of an Idol God, or give the World at least an Opinion of its Power from the Success of the Means by that Idol directed and prescribed: Vespasian himself understood he had the Power from Serapis; and as this was his Conclusion when the Event followed, so the Consequence with him was the Honour and Worship of the Idol; Idol; and therefore others, we may be fure

made the same Inference.

Therefore I must say, that the Scholar does by no means drive home the Objection, but rather defignedly let it fall, when he fays after this But fure the Worthip of Serapis would by fuch an Accidental Advantage be strangely encouraged, &c. and especially when he contents himself with this Author's Answer, which puts it off as though it was only a false Application of the People, to ascribe the Effect to Serapis. 'Tis plain the Idol God directed, and therein as good as foretold it, and confequently it could be no other Power that fulfilled it, unless we can suppose the True God to act at the Will, and for the Reputation of an Idol Deity. And 'tis evident that Vespasian himself understood and attributed it to the Power of that God that directed the Means for it, and 'twas a Reasonable Consequence. This Author, however, has further to fay, "That 'tis not an uncommon Thing to find " the Gentiles attributing these fort of Visi-" ons and Salutary Admonitions, to Serapis, "Ins, and others (according to the Country " and the Deity they Worshiped) which "yet might-well proceed from the True "God, the Father of Spirits. At this rate all the Communication which the Gentile World had with Devils, might be gueffed to be a Communication with the True God. Twas

Twas, no doubt, possible for the True God to have Communication with them, and to give them Visions and Salutary Admonitions; but to think he had, and should not make known himself, but suffer them to attribute those Admonitions and Visions to their Idols which they had from him, is no way reasonable: This would be to suppose the True God the great Instrument of the Peoples Delusion; and if this Absurdity were to be let pass, this Author's Argument is altogether precarious. If he thinks it might be so in this Case, another may think it might not; and an Heathen might with much more Reason insist upon it, that it was Serapis appeared in the Vision, and worked the Cure, than he can that it might be otherwise: The faying it might, or might not, will neither take off, nor answer in this Case the Objection.

There is more a great deal that this Author might have said, if he had pleased to remove this Objection from himself and his own Principles; but he was now to serve a Turn of his own another way: He must find some Instance by which he might make it seem as though his Distinction of Miracles into Providential and Evidential were of some use to the Desence of Christianity, against all Exceptions; and so this Fact done by an Heathen, must be allowed to be a Miracle, and the Credit of the Re-

e

e.

ld

ir,

ch

ue

ite

ile

ed

od.

115

U 3

lators

lators good; whereas greater Works have been denied by him to be miraculous, when 'twas thought fit for his Purpose. That which I would put this Author in mind of. is Tacitus's faying that the Emperor put itto the Physicians, whether the Cure of these Infirmities might be wrought by Humane Power, and that the Physicians reasoned variously upon it, at last affirming and giving this Judgment, "That the Blind Man's Eyes "were not perished, but if that which him-"dred was drawn or taken off, his Sight "would return; and likewise that the other's "Lameness was from a Dislocation of the "Joint, which might with a convenient " Force be put right again: Which was to fay, that it might be done by Human Power, and by Natural Means. This might have helped this Author, that according to his Principles he might have denied it to be a Miracle if he had pleased: But this, it seems, was not a Case wherein he desired to deny it.

I, for my own part, however, (if the Relation be admitted as true) should not go about to deny the Fact's being a Miracle, because though I judge by the Physicians Report, that both the Cures might have been wrought by Human Power, and Natural Means, yet I do not see that the Cure was wrought by such Means, not one of them at least: A great Stroke, or a Kick might

might probably effect the Cure, as to the Diflocation of the Joint in him that was Lame, which was the Remedy defired, and very probably the Means used in that Case; but the Spittle to cure and take off the Film of the Eye, I do not apprehend to be a Probable Natural Means, and therefore think the Work above Human Power to effect, by those Means by which it was brought to pass; and therefore I must allow the one, if not both to be Miraculous: But then as the Idol God directed to the Means, and foretold the Cure, and confequently must be supposed to have given the Power for it, I repute it to be the Devil's Work, as being the Work of a Power feeking to fet it felf up for God by this Sign: And there is a Reason to conclude it a Work not above the Power of a Damon, for that the Physicians judged it possible to be done by Human Power, and Natural, fo it were Proper Means. I do not think a Spirit stands in need of the same Means as we do in any fuch Case, but that it may do all that we can do, and more, in a Way peculiar to it felf, as having greater Skill, Force and Subtilty.

There is also another thing in Tacitus's Story of this Matter, which our Author would have done well to have taken notice of, and let us have seen whether his Distinction of Miracles into Providential and Evi-

U 4

dential,

dential, would have solved it. I mean, the Original Story of the God Serapis, which Tacitus thought fit to fet down in his History upon this occasion; (whence I conclude that Tacitus himself also ascribed the Effect to the Power of this God.) The Ægyptian Priests, he says, report the Story thus-" That Ptolomee King of " Ægypt, when he had walled the lately-"built City of Alexandria, erected Tem-" ples, and instituted Religious Rites, saw " in his Sleep a Fair Young Man, of more "than ordinary Stature, who warned him " to fend to Pontus, and fetch thence his "Image, that it would bring great Prospe-" rity to his City and Kingdom, &c. and " straightway the Young Man seemed to "go up to Heaven out of his fight in a great Flame of Fire. Ptolomee, moved with fo great a Miracle, consulted the " Ægyptian Priests; who being ignorant " of Pontus and Foreign Countries, he asked Timotheus an Athenian what God that " might be. Timotheus consulting with Tra-" vellers, understood that there was a City " called Sinope, and near to it a Temple de-" dicated to Pluto, and by it stood the Image of Proferpina. But Ptolomee, more " addicted to his Pleasures than to Religion, forgets or neglects the Matter, un-"til the same Vision appeared to him again "in a more terrible manner, greatly threat-" ning

" ning him, if he did not perform its Com-"mandment. Then Ptolomee lent an Em-" baffy with Presents to the King of Sinope, " willing those he fent, to go by Delphos, "and ask Counsel of Apollo. Their Jour-"ney by Sea was prosperous, and Apollo's " Answer without Ambiguity, that they " should go forward, and bring with them "the Image of his Father, but leave his Si-"fter's. They came to Sinope, and deliver-"ed their Message and Presents: But the "King of Sinope was doubtful, and feared "the Displeasure of the Gods, and of his "own People, and fo was not willing to "comply; but upon repeated Messages, "and Prefents of store of Gold, he at " length was fomewhat inclinable. At the "last, a fearful threatning Vision appears " to him, charging him no longer to hin-"der that which the God had determined: "And as he protracted notwithstanding, " many Mischiess befel him and his People, "and divers Diseases, and the Wrath of the "Gods vexed him more and more. "common People however still withstood "their King's motion of fending away the "God; and to prevent it, beset the Tem-"ple; whereupon a strong Report goeth, "that the Image without hands conveyed it " felf into the Ships which were fent for it; "and which was wonderful, through fo "vast Seas they arrived at Alexandria the " Third

"Third Day." Our Author cannot well question the Truth of this Story, because his Historian Tacitus, upon whose Credit he believes the other Story, does not feem but to believe it, or 'tis not likely he would have told it upon this occasion. Visions, I suppose, he will never suggest might proceed from the True God; nor the Answer of Apollo, nor the Miracle of the Image's getting away from the People that befet the Temple, and conveying it felf on board the Ships that were fent for it, and what followed, of the Ships reaching Alexandria through so vast Seas the Third Day. His Historian Tacitus seems to account these as much Miracles, as Vespassian's Cure of the Blind and Lame by the help of this Power. Let our Author either give up the Credit of his Historian, or tell us how these may be reckoned only Providential Miracles. I for my part think the Credit of the Historian shakes in this Relation, as it seemed to me to do in the other: But if this Narrative were allowed True, it would not in the least prejudice the Cause of True Religion, on the Supposition which I take must be granted; namely, That if any Thing of this was true in Fact, it was all done by the Devil, was a Deluson of his to deceive Mankind to the Worship of himself. And if I make it appear, as Ido not question but I have already, and

f

W

T

66

66

46

46

66

66

shall do more fully still, That the Power of God hath been, and hath shewn it felf, above all the Gods of the Heathen; the Things done by their Power shall not in the least render that Religion questionable, which is established upon Evidences given to it by the Infinite, Unbounded, and Uncontroulable Power of God: Yea, it shall be a Conviction to the Heathen, that they ought to turn from those their Idols and Superstitions, to the Living God, the God that made the Heavens; and to the Worship of this the only True God, according to the Instruction which the Lord Jefus Christ hath given us as to the Worship he requireth, that is to fay, to the Worship of Him the only God in Spirit and in Truth.

Now comes the Scholar to ask his Instru-Essay, dor concerning Apollonius Tyanæus, what he P. 130. shall do with him and his Works, which were so strange and surprizing, that he has heard of his being compared to Jesus Christ. True (fays this Author) "Great Things are " said of that Man; and Hierocles, who " was himself a considerable Man, compa-"red him to Christ, and wrote a Book to "that purpose, which Eusebius answered. "And he who reads Philostratus's Life of "him, will find cause to believe that he "had read the New Testament, and in-"tended Apollonius should be very like "Christ."—This methinks looks fufpicious,

F

1

e

1-

10

n

A,

1-

)r-

ar,

all

picious, and should have been suggested to be so; that 'tis to be thought the Writer of the Life made him to be as near as he could what he intended him, and confequently little Credit can be given to his Sto. ry. This would have been a good Reafon to demand Vouchers of Philostratus, who (our Author tells us), "wants "them very much, his History being " fo written, that he dares trust any Fair In-" genious Heathen with it, and make him "judge whether the Life and Miracles of "Apollonius be to be compared with the "Life and Miracles of Christ. But thenthis Author must not give him to understand that there is no difference between great and Small, and many and few Miracles; if he does, I do not fee what Judgment an Ingenious Heathen should make from his comparing the one and the other: Nor must this Author allow Philostratus, that wants Vouchers, to have the Credit he is about to give him. Let it be granted (he says) that " Apollonius wrought Miracles, what "will follow? That Apollonius's Religion is "true? What was it? Where is it to be " found ? Give us an Account of the The-" ology he taught, and defigned to plant and " propagate, &c. There's nothing of Argument in all this and the rest that follows; tis meer Harangue, and inconsistent with it felf. " Let it be granted that Apolloniu " wrought

n

a

t

6

10

tl

h

M

21

S

n of

le

15

Id

e-

nift

its

ut (s)

nat is

be

be-

ind

Ar-

WS;

ith

ills

ght

"wrought Miracles, what will follow? That " Apollonius's Religion is true ? " Here methinks our Author should have stopped, to fay fomething to the contrary, and give a Reason why it should not follow; but inflead of that What was it? he fays. Has not this Author himself told us it, say I? "Sacrificing to Jupiter, to Hercules, to "the Sun, and other Deities, according to Pag. 132. "the Places he came to; " that is to fay, His Religion-was all kind of Idolatrous Worthip. "Where is it to be found? "Give us an Account of the Theology he "taught, &c. Thanks be to God, there is very little of the Pagan Idolatry now to be found, at least in our part of the World; and as for Apollonius in particular, that is come to pass of him which has been the Fate of other Deceivers, who have boafted themselves to be great ones, that himself and his Works being not of God, are come to nought; the Theology he defigned to plant and propagate, is not remembred, and that Memory which remains of him in Story, is, that he was a Magician that did his Works by the Power of the Devil, and a great Ido-This is what is remembred of him in the Christian World: And what the Heathens have left us of him, is, That he was a Worker of Miracles, and yet a Worshipper of their Gods in their Way of Supersticion; and his Works they oppose to the Miracles

of

of Fesus Christ. " But he was a strict Dif-" ciple of Pythagoras' (fays our Author) yet "did not tell the World, that they must all " of them follow Pythagoras; that was not " the way of the Ancient Philosophers, to " tell the People they must change their O. "pinions, or the Gods would not favour " them; nor was it the way of Apollonius. I have not heard, indeed, that it was the Way of any of the Ancient Philosophers to work Miracles, and therefore do not fee how they could have any Pretentions to tell the World, that their Opinions were the Mind of the Gods, or that the Gods would not favour them, unless they acknowledged and believed their Philosophy. But what is this to the Way of Apollonius? If they did not make any fuch Pretensions, might not this Man? especially doing that which none of them ever pretended to. What he might, or might not do of this nature, is no better known to this Author than to the rest of the World: The World at present knows little of what he did; neither does our Author know what he did not of this kind: "He went up and down (he fays) in a "Strange Habit, and corrected Peoples Er-" rors, and blamed their Vicious Practices, " and faid many good and wife Things, and "talked to Great Princes with a Freedom "that became a True Philosopher, that va-" lued not the World, nor all it could offer. -This

This is to represent, I presume, this Impostor as a Good Man, that he might be thought to be favoured of God, and so to be endued with Power from on high for the Works he did: But St. Paul I think hath told us, 2 Cor. 11. 15. that Satan himfelf hath sometimes been transform'd into an Angel of Light; therefore it is no great Thing if his Ministers also be transform'd as the Ministers of Righteousness: And our Saviour hath given us a Caution to beware of False Prophets that come in Sheeps Cloathing; which I take to be the appearance of Virtue; whom, nevertheless, we may know, he says, by their Fruits; as this Man, for Instance, by his Idolatrous Practices: If in other Things his Cunning concealed his Hypocrifie, by these we may be able to judge, and not with wrong Judgment, what Ends the Specious Pretext of Virtue was to cover. "But he set up for no Religion, says our Author; he amended the Ceremonies of " several People, but he left them otherwise "in the way he found them. What does our Author mean by this that he fays, —He fet up for no Religion? Is it that he was an Atheist, and so all Religions were to him alike? Or is it that he fet up no New Religion of his own? The first of these, as it would be a Reproach to this great Philosopher, so would it be an Objection against all Religion, and all the Evidence that any Religion

f

of

S

2

r-

nd

m

2-

r.

is

Religion can have from Miraeles, if an Atheir could work them. And what fignifies his not fetting up a New Religion, if he approved and practifed the Heathen Superstition ? His Miracles in this Case must be as great an Objection against Christianity, as if he had been the Author of a New Superstition. But does not our Author here also contradict himself, in faying, that He amended the Ceremonies of some People? What were those Ceremonies, I would fain know, but the Superstitious and Idolatrous Rites of the Heathen Worship? whose Rituals he in some respects amended, or pretended to amend, but left them otherwise in their old Vanities, to worship the Gods they did before, which were Idols, and no Gods. "He facrificed "(fays our Author) to Jupiter, to Hercu-"les, to the Sun, and other Deities, accord-"ing to the Places he came to. we know by this what his Religion was, though our Author is pleased to take notice, that he did not facrifice with any Living Creatures, this being against his Master's Rule: I hope this is not to fet forth the Virtue of the Man, nor the Excellency of the Sacrifices by him used: For I have heard fay of this Man, that he approved of the Worship of Diana by the Lacedemonians, with Human Blood. But as for the Sacrificing of other Living Creatures, I shall never think, for all that can be fuggefted from Apolloni's 118'9 w's Practice, or his Master Pythagoras's Rule, but that the Sacrifices which God was pleafed to require of that kind heretofore, were required with good Reason, and upon wife Grounds, for Ends neither unworthy the Divine Wisdom, nor inconsistent with a Di-

vine Goodness.

1

S

le

of d

ne th

of

k,

8'9

And if now I should believe Philostratus as to the Miracles which he relates of this Man's doing, as well the Considerable, as the Poor ones reported of him; yet inafinuch as I know his Religion to be false and impious, I insist upon it, that his Works were not of God. "But he valued himself nothing upon their account (fays our Author) but "attributed them all to God. I have heard that he so much valued himself, that being questioned by Domitian for this, among other Things, thathe allo wed himself to be thought a God, he infifted upon, and justified himself in it: And I desire this Author to tell us, to what God he ascribed his Works; methinks he should have ascribed his Works to some or other of the Godshe worshipped, as Jupiter, &c. I would willingly know to which of them; or if it were to the True God, that this might be shewn, and afterward a Reason given why this Man that said o many wife and good Things, should act so oolishly and wickedly, and give so wretchd an Example, as having afcribed his Works the True God, to worship those which were were Idols, and no Gods. But (fays our Author) "He wrought none of his Works " to testifie that any God had sent him, and " he drew no Consequences from any thing "he had done. Our Author's Negative, I am fure cannot be proved, and I suppose he is so confident in it, because he will think it not fit to be put upon its Proof. This I ean affert affirmatively of him, that his great Endeavour was to order and establish the Worship of the Heathen Gods whereever he came; and he wrote a Book, or Books concerning Sacrifices to be offered to them, fetting forth which were proper for the feveral Gods. And what should give him Authority with the People for either of these but his Miracles, I cannot conceive I would have our Author shew me that a Philosopher did ever by Reason or Argument so far prevail upon the Superstition of the Common People, as to be suffered to innovate in Matters of this nature. is a particular Fact of this Man's also, which I would likewise have our Author to consider, which was his bringing of Achilles's Ghost into the Image, and making it to speak, after which the Men of Thessaly were advised and directed by him to worship A chilles; and then inform me if I think amil in supposing, that he drew this Work of he into confequence, for the fetting up, or con firming the Worthip of an Idol God. An

É

if our Author does think Apollonius ill used, in its being supposed of him, that he acted in opposition to Christianity, that not appearing in Philostratus, who wrote his Life; I would defire him to confider, that the Christian Writers were not the Persons that raifed this Report of him, but the Heathen, fuch as his confiderable Hierocles, &c. that urged the Miracles and the Practice of this Man against the Christians, and against the Truth of their Religion, because this Man was a worker of Miracles, and yet a Pradifer and Regulator of the Gentile Worship; and if the first Writers on behalf of Christianity, allow the Truth of the Matter of Fact in both Cases, it was doubtless because they who lived nearer the Time of those Transactions, saw no Reason to deny it; the latter at least; i.e. his Worship of the Gentile Gods, and Regulation of their Superstitions to no better a purpose, than leaving them in the Way of their former Vanities they never offered at any denial of, doubtless because 'twas known to be true; otherwife 'tis to be thought they would have brought that in question, as well as the Credit of the Historian, in reference to his Miracles, which is questioned in divers Particulars: But this, however, shall be sufficient for me, which was the chief Thing that the Ancient Christian Writers infisted upon, that whether the Story of the Miracles of X 2 Apol-

p Amis
of his

COR

Am

II

d

g

ne

nk

SI

iis

ish

re-

10

to

for

ive

rof

ive.

t a

gu-

n of

to

nere

hich

onsi-

Hess

t to

were

Apollonius was true or falle, it shall be no prejudice to the Truth of the Christian Religion: If false, there's an end at once; if otherwise, his Miracles will neither establish his own Religion, nor subvert the Religion of Jesus Christ; not even though they were wrought for either, or both of these Purpo. fes: Not the former, because it's believed that Devils may by their Cunning and Power enable Ill Men to amuse and raise the wonder of the World; wherefore Miracles shall not establish a Religion, but where there is an Evidence also that they are wrought by the Finger of God: Nor the latter, because the Christian Religion is established, not barely upon Miracles, but upon fuch Miracles as we know to be wrought by the Spirit and Power of the Lord that made the Heavens. I think fit, with our Author's good leave, to infert here a Passage out of Lactantius; not to choak our Author with Lactantius's great Name, but to convince him with the Argument therein; at least, to have the World take notice, that the Afgument upon which I have all along infiled, is no other than that which the Christians first infifted on, when this Comparison between Christ and Apollonius was first attempted and objected to the prejudice of Christianity. "Learn, or know (fays "Lactantius to the Heathen Writer that " had made this Objection) if thou half?

" mind

LaCtant. Lib. 50. " mind to understand the True Reason of "the Christian's Belief, viz. That Christ is "not only therefore thought and believed by "us to be God, because he did wonderful "Things, for the Miracles he wrought, but " because we see in him all those Things " done and fulfilled which were before told us " of him in the Prophets. He wrought Mi-" racles! we might have thought him a Ma-" gician, as you say of him, and as the Jews "now think, if all the Prophets had not with " one Mouth, and by the Same Spirit fore-"told that Christ should do those very Things. "Therefore we believe him to be God, not "more for his Deeds and Wonderful Works, "than for that his very Death upon the Crofs. "(which you catch and fnarl at) for that "this also was foretold of him: Not there-"fore upon his own Testimony (for who "giveth credit to a Man speaking of him-" felf? ) but upon the Testimony of the "Prophets, who long before spake of all "these Things which he did and suffered, "his Divinity is believed; which never-"could, nor ever possibly can at any time "happen, in reference to Apollonius or Apu-"leius, or any Magician whatfoever." The Argument here is of like purport with that Conclusion which our Saviour Christ himfelf inferred from the Evidence he had given, that he cast out Devils, and did his other Works by the Spirit of God; namely, X 3 that

V-

ne

es

re

at-

ta-

on

by

ade

or's

t of

ith

nce

aft,

Ar-

fift-

ifti-

ison

at-

e of

fays

that

all a

nind

that by this Men might know, and were obliged to acknowledge that the Kingdom of God was come unto them. This Conclusion there is no Reason to make upon every one that we fee work Miracles; until there be fatisfaction given concerning the Power by which fuch Miracles are wrought: Therefore whenever we see an use made of them to the Prejudice of that Kingdom which God by Christ intended to set up in the Hearts of Men (that they might acknowledge him the only True God, and his Son Christ whom he hath sent, and serve him in that Kingdom and Righteousness that he hath commanded) we may conclude fuch Miracles to be the Works of that wicked One who hath always endeavoured to fet himself up against God, to erect to himself a Kingdom, having been a Lyar and a Deceiver of the Nations from the beginning.

This shall suffice to shew the weakness of our Author's Harangue to get himself clear of the Objection, as to Apollonius's Miracles, who was an Approver of the Heathen Worship: In which, however, nothing gives me more offence than the last Thing he has said, when he takes his Leave, as he calls it, of Apollonius; namely, "That nothing so ill becomes the Mouth of a "Deist, as reproaching to Christians the Miracles of Apollonius; for if they are true, "it

"it is not Deism, but Polytheism is establish-" ed, for he facrificed in his Way to the "Gods all round, as their Temples occur-"red to him" I am offended at this, because I cannot think this Author so ignorant but that he must know that what the Deist would have, is, that Apollonius wrought Miracles for the establishment of Polytheism: The Deist feeks no Miracles for his own Opinion; but if it be granted him, that Apollonius's Miracles were true, and if true, were a Proof for Polytheism, he will allow the Miracles of Jesus Christ to be as good a Proof for Christianity, and will believe as much of one as of the other; that is, will believe neither. I doubt the Atheist also may laugh in his Sleeve at this, that after so much Argument, when the greatest Objection, not against Christianity only, but against all revealed Religion, cannot be well got over, an Absurdity should be retorted upon the Adversary, which is so far from being an Absurdity to him, that 'tis the main thing he has to defire, to lay Religion and its Truth under the greatest Absurdity.

I will agree with this Author in the next thing he comes to, thus far, That the Instruments may not always be Good and Holy Persons by whom God works Miracles: But will insist upon it against him notwithstanding, that the Religion must needs be

it

2

e,

X 4

True

True, for the fake of which God giveth the Power to work them. And neither the Instances nor Argument of this Author shall prove any thing to the contrary. Balaam prophesied, I grant, but the Credit his Prophecy hath, is not because Balaam by his Divination had got himself so great a Name, that the King of Moab fent to him, faying, I wot whom thou bleffest is bleffed, and whom thou curfest is cursed: and required him to curse Israel: But because it is known the God of Ifrael rebuked the Madness of the Prophet: Because the Scripture hath told us, that he who went out with defign to curfe, and used his Enchantments for that purpose, was met by the True God ( when he waited, as we have reason to suppose, for his Dæmon ) and forced against his Will to bless the People of God, and to confess and say, There is no Inchantment against Jacob, nor Divination against Israel. Which Instance is therefore rather against than for our Author's purpose in any respect, as it sheweth us that the Power of God can over-rule when he pleaseth the Power of the Devil and his Instruments, and even turn them against their own Master, to the serving of God's Divine Will and Purpose. The Prophecy of Caiaphas serveth to the Truth of Christ, as referring to his Death, and the End for which he should dye; wherein the Spirit of God had a MeanS

a

1,

d,

1-

is d-

re

th

its

ue

ced

od,

nt-

ra-

any r of

the

nts,

Ma-

Will

phas

ring

n he

had

lean-

a Meaning which the Prophet never apprehended. And supposing that Judas being fent by Christ among the rest of the Apofiles, to preach the Gospel, cure Diseases, and work Miracles, did accordingly cure Difeafes and work Miracles; there is the same Reason to suppose that he also preached the Gospel as the rest did; and thus his Miracles tended to the Establishment and Confirmation of the True Religion only. And for those of whom our Saviour speaks, that in his Name and by his Power cast out Devils, and did many wonderful Works; to whom nevertheless he will say in the Last Day, I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity: it appears of the same Persons, that they should alledge their Prophesying, that is to fay, their preaching the Gospel, in his Name also; and in this Case they might well be allowed to have their Power from God for the casting out Devils, &c. So that these Instances no way prove, but that the Religion must be of necessity True, for the sake of which God shall give the Power for working Miracles. For further, As to the Case of those, who beng themselves Workers of Iniquity, are yet aid to have cast out Devils, and done many vonderful Works in Christ's Name, i.e. through Faith in his Name, or by his Powr; that their prophesying in his Name must be interpreted to be according to the Truth

as it is in Jesus, that Doctrine which he ap. pointed to be preached in his Name; there is Reason sufficient to think, from its being offered as a Plea; which it could not be supposed it should be, were it any other than Christ's Doctrine. And to confirm, that otherwise the Power of Christ would not have wrought with them, though they had used his Name, the Instance of the Sons of Sceva the Jew, Acts 19. 15. goes a great way with me: Those Exorcists who took upon them to call over them which had Evil Spirits, the Name of the Lord Jesus, prevailing nothing by it, whilst they adjured by Fesus whom Paul preached, themselves not preaching his Doctrine as Paul.

Scholar's words, That though the People or

Persons may not all be good and boly by whom God works Miracles, yet fure the Religion they profess, for the sake of which

Therefore I shall now say in this Author's

God giveth the Power, must needs be True. And whereas this Author gives him for An-

fwer, —Then have we been talking all this while to no purpose; I cannot pass a Com-

plement upon him, and fay it has been to

very much purpose, because I may not in

Ceremony dissemble the Truth. Yet I do not absolutely dislike what follows, name-

ly, "The Christian Religion it self is not "true only because Miracles have been, are,

and may be wrought by and among Chri-

" ftians:

t

2

P tl

fh

ex

lie

m

no tha

mo

ref Cl

Effay, P. 135.

r

d

IS

it

k

1-

y

ot

r's

or

by

ich rue.

In-

this

omn to

in I do

menot

are,

Chri-

ians:

" stians: For by that Argument all the Re-"ligions that ever were in the World may "be true, unless we can disprove all the "Histories and Accounts that have been gi-"ven us, and fay that no Relations but "those in the Scriptures are true; a Task "hard to be undertaken:" But yet I am concerned and troubled, not to find here, how I shall know then that the Christian Religion is true, and that the others were false. Which Defect I shall thus supply, affirming, That the Christian Religion is true, as the Truth thereof hath been confirmed by Miracles, and those Miracles have appeared to have been wrought by the Finger of God: But that the Heathen Religion is not true, notwithstanding the Miracles which their Story tells of, because I am fatisfied that the Power of the Devil can do and enable to do great things, to whose Power I impute the Things done among them; for that the Gods whom they worshipped, and to whom they ascribed those extraordinary Things, I have Reason to believe were Devils, and not the God that made Heaven and Earth.

Nevertheless, in all this I have no Drift nor Design upon our Author, neither I hope shall I involve my self in any Difficulty more than what I may get well clear of, in reference to the Miracles pretended to in the Church of Rome. I cannot indeed run on

fo

fo fiercely as this Author at the first onset, nor will I retreat, and leave them the Field at last, so great an Advantage as he seems to me to have done: Before I step forward against this Adversary, I must distinguish between the Religion the Church of Rome professeth, and the Errors in that Church. Their Religion I take to be the Christian Religion, were their Corruptions thereof fet aside; and there is to my apprehension a great deal more Reason to think, that Miracles wrought in a Christian Church may be wrought by the Finger of God, than there can be to conceive the like of Miracles wrought among the Heathens, and by them ascribed to the Idol Gods they worshipped: And consequently, I do not think it may be faid, as to Miracles in a Christian Church, that they no more conclude for the Truth of Religion, than fuch Works among the Gentiles conclude for their Superstition. I look upon all Instances wherein our Saviour's Prediction may be thought verified, that such Signs should follow them who believe, &c. Mark 16.17. to be a Confirming Evidence of the Christian Truth: Neither, tho I apprehend Miracles to be now ceased, as the great Reason of, and need for them has indeed worn off; can I think fit, however, to infift, that God will no more give any Power of that kind (he is able at all times to do it, and may do it at his Pleasure, will

f dit

rI

F

e

TI

I

I

C

rti

li

W

P

1

n

e

25

m

l: be

h,

th he

I

VI-

ed,

ue,

VI-10'

as

128

er,

iny

nes

vill

do

do it whenever he has any Ends of Wisdom or Goodness to serve thereby:) Nor do I fee any Reason upon which I can infer that God will never shew his Power in Miracles even in the Church of Rome, though it be a Corrupt Church: It is known God fent his Prophets, and some of them with this Power to the Jewish Church, even though they were then fo Corrupt a Church, that the generality of the People were fallen to Idolatry; and the like he may possibly do again: But as the Business of those Prophets which God sent to the Jews of old, was to testifie against them, to turn them to the Lord; fo I persuade my self, that the Spirit of the Lord in any Prophets that he shall fend, or raise up in the Church of Christ, will testifie against its Corruptions, and require that She repent, and do her first Works. But as on the other hand there were many False Prophets among the Jews in those Days, who prophesied Lyes and Deceits, and Arengthen-Jer. 23. ed the hands of Evil Doers, that they return v. 14, and ed not from their Wickedness, and pretend-33 ring Visions; and Dreams, caused the Lord's People to err, by their Lies, and by their Lightness, whenas God sent them not, nor commanded them. And whereas the Scripture of the New Testament hath said, - Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God, for many False Prophets are gone out into the World, I John 4. I.

Mi

he

pp

ac

in

fel

iul

the

er

ce

qu

pe

ry

m

ar

OR

3

ta

t

I

t

1

1

Ì

t

Prophets in the Christian Church likewise, and conclude, that whatever Message cometh from the Spirit of God unto the Churches, it will be of this kind and purport, ——Remember what has been received and heard, and hold fast, and Repent: And consequently, that whosoever shall say of themselves, they are Apostles, we are to try before that we receive them; and if they come, and bring not the Doctrine of Christ, by this they shall be found Lyars, that they have not the Power of God, to which they may pretend.

And after this I cannot recede and leave the Romanists so much Advantage as this Author has done, when he fays to these Pedple, " Lay down the Doctrines before-hand, " and tell us, that God to testifie the Truth " of those Doctrines, hath given you Power " to work Miracles, and then work them in "the Presence of those who are to be con-"vinced of the Truth of what you fay, —For as I take this to be an Advantage that ought not to be granted them, fol cannot see that the Demand is justifiable in us: For as to the Argument herein suggested, that the Miracles, if any such are, should be done and wrought among us, in fuch Places and Times as we shall require, I doubt there will lie a great Objection against us, should it be insisted on against Miracles

Miracles of any good Credit; namely, that he Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees called apon our Saviour to shew his Signs and Miacles (fuch Signs as they pleased to call for, and in Places and Times of their own chuing) but were refused: And even we our felves must insist upon it, that they were justly refused; for that it must be left to the Will of God to shew and exert his Power, in what Place, or Time, or what Instances he shall himself think fit; which was our Lord's Answer in substance, to those that required or expected from him to do those Works in Galilee which he had done in Capernaum, Luke 4. 23. So that I question very much whether this Argument would bear, should any great stress be put upon it. must therefore, I fear, give the Adversary an Advantage, at least among those in their own Communion, who are amused with Reports of Miracles on every hand. And again, there is a yet much greater Advantage than this left to them, in what our Author hath faid as to their laying down their Doctrines before-hand, and then working their Miracles, and his feeming to concede and grant the Point, if this be done. as the Scripture supposed of a False Prophet heretofore, that the Sign of which he spake to them, faying, or when he faid, Let us go after other Gods, might come to pass; so I see nothing to make it be thought the Cale

is the min he I

200

an

be

pi

al

15

L

pr

ha

fe

to

m

go a r

5 3

..

ho to

öu

vei

or Fal

lòi

iot

Case would be otherwise now, but that if a False Prophet might work a Miracle to de. ceive the World to believe a Lye, he might before-hand speak his False Message, and tell of the Sign that he would give, and that fuch Sign might be permitted to come to pass. And inasmuch as it is said in Scripture of the great Antichrist, the Man of Sin, that he fitteth in the Temple of God; which I take to fignifie, that he shall arise and set himself up in the Church of Christ; and as it is of him further faid, that his coming is after the working of Satan, &c. 2 Thes. 2.9. I can have no certainty that it will never please God to suffer, and permit this Deceiver to do his great Wonders even in our Sight, and to do them in confirmation even of those his very Sayings to us, wherein he endeavoureth to deceive. I apprehend therefore that I am absolutely obliged to infift, that the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of Rome, from which we have reformed, are contrary to, and destructive of the Truth of Christ; and as they are such, though the Miracles which they pretend were true in Fact (which, nevertheless, I cannot suppose they are, after the discovery of fo many Cheats and Impostures as have been known and found); however, they ought not to obtain fo much Credit with us, as to be received for Works of God's Power, or to oblige us to receive any other Do-& rine drine than that of Christ. This Scripture shall be opposed against them, Gal. 1. v. 8. Though we or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which has been preached, let him be accurfed; and shall but to filence at once all their Delufion, and all their Arguments to Support it. And this is the only Thing that can be of effect to deliver those who are deceived to believe a Lye, to put them upon the tryal of such as pretend the Power and Spirit of God, and have it not.

And thus, I hope, I have discharged my felf of this Author's Book: I wish it may be to his fatisfaction; however, that nothing may be wanting in me towards it, I shall go through his Recapitulation also, though a needless Repetition, and say, that "How "remarkable soever the difference may be "betwixt fuch as work Miracles, that one

e

d I

y

70

ey

15,

W-

0ne " shall know and declare before-hand that he Essay." " shall be enabled to work them; it is not, however, to be infifted on as the Criterion to distinguish the Lord's Prophets. I grant our Lord Christ to have known, and in divers Cases foretold what he would do; but I do not find that he has given us this Rule, or any Thing like it, for the difcerning of falle Prophets; and I think he would have one it, had it been true or certain. I do of pretend that one acting by the Power If the Devil, is table to foretel with certain-

ty what he will do, because it's in God's Power always to hinder and over-rule; but this I insist upon, that as God permits Evil Spirits, and Evil Men by their help to work Miracles, so he has not assured us that he never will permit, and fo is at liberty to permit if he shall think fit, the Sign which a Falle Prophet hath spoken of to come to pass, as 'tis supposed in the Case, Deut. 13. that this will be permitted. Moses, I allow, was before-hand instructed of God, that he should do several Miracles, which he also foretold he would do; the Magicians, I fuppose, were also sent for by the King of A. gypt, to see what they could do; but I take it, that he had not fent for them, but upon Experience, or some Information at least, of their having done great Things, like those which Moses wrought. And as to the Magitians not knowing they should do any Thing, I say it must be supposed they thought they might do fomething, or they had not attempted to do any thing, but would have flood and looked on, as they feem to have done, without any further attempt, after they had feen, and came to know their own Weakness. And this I also suppose they knew, that they had Familiarity with, if not some Power, as they thought, over Spirits invilible by their Enchantments, which had heretofore, and which they might therefore now think might be able to affift them to do do like Moses. It must be granted, however, that they who act by any other Power than that of God ; i. e. by the Power of the Devil, knew not when to begin, nor when to make an end, because the Power which the Devil himself has, is a limited Power. They therefore which are affifted by him, if it might be supposed that they could know from him the Extent of his Power, how far he can affift them; yet in that they cannot possibly know how far he shall be permitted to affift them, know not confequently, with certainty, whether he can help them at the beginning, nor that he shall be permitted to help them to the End; because they know nothing as to what God will permit him, and them by him to do; nor what he will controul them in, nor when. Hence was it that the Magicians failed in the Competition that was between them and Moses; and by this their Failure, appeared the Difference and the Inequality of the Powers by which the one and the other acted; fo that the Magicians could not do that which was to any Man's thinking full as easy, or rather more easy than what they had done before, when they attempted to turn Dust into Lice, and could not; this shewing, that though God thought fit to permit the Power of Satan to bring to pass greater Things, he could controul it even in the least: And thus indeed it appeared of Y z the

0

on of sie

g,

ey

at-

ve

ve

ter

WI

W,

me

isi-

ere-

ore

to

do

the Magicians, that they neither knew with certainty what they should do, nor what they should not do; but as this appeared only in the Event, when the Magicians Power failed, it could stand in no stead to distinguish the one's Miracles from the other. whilft they wrought Works alike, nor would it where there shall be no Competition: There is, however, some use to be made of it, if the Thing were rightly confidered, and that looked into which was indeed the true Reason why these Magicians did not, and will always be a Reason why False Prophets never can know with certainty what they shall be able to do in Works of this nature; which is, that having their Power from the Devil, their Power must be under limitation, and the Controul of God always, because His is so. Nevertheless, as God is not to be confined by us, neither in the Measure of Power that he shall think fit to give himself, nor in the Permission that he may give, or Restraint that he shall think fit to lay on the Power of the Devil and his Agents; we have no ground to lay down this for a Rule, that every one that hath not fuccess to his Desire in every Thing that he attempteth of a Miraculous Work, is a False Prophet: Nor on the other hand, that every one that foretelleth that he shall do a Miracle, and the Event followeth, is immediately to be concluded

P

to be a True Prophet, and to have the Power er of God. This Author has not thought God obliged to go out of the Way of his Providence to controul a Bold Gueffer; let him give a Reason that shall oblige him more as to a bold Undertaker. The Truth is this; God may give of his Spirit and Power in what measure he pleaseth; and hence sometimes his own Prophets that have their Power from him, may possibly not have a certain knowledge of what God will affift them to do, and may not have fuccess God also may peralike in all Attempts. mit or restrain the Devil and his Agents at his pleasure, and so can at any time disappoint and defeat the Agents and Instruments of Satan in any of their Attempts, and likewife in any thing which shall be foretold by them; but yet as Satan doth attempt, notwithstanding the Power of God can baffle him in his Attempts, and often is permitted to perform what he attempteth, though God could hinder him; fo may this fubtile Spirit take upon him to foretel Things that he will do, notwithstanding God's Ability to prevent its coming to pass; and in like manner God may permit it to come to pass, though he might have hinder'd it. 'Tis not therefore for us to prescribe to God in one. respect or other, nor consequently to make Rules for finding out and trying his Prophets, or determining concerning the Credit

dit of such as appear to come with the Power of Miracles, other than those which his Word directeth us to, and warranteth: And whosoever is so bold as to go about doing it, must presently find himself at a loss; For who knoweth the Mind of the Lord,

or who hath been his Counsellor?

As for the Miracles then done by and among the Heathen, as of this kind, no doubt, we have many Reports more than are true, a Wife Observing Man will well consider the Circumstances and Evidence of fuch Stories, before he believe or give Credit to them; but as for those to which Credit cannot be reasonably resused, they being well attested, I cannot think that they are to be put upon this Issue to disprove their Evidence or Authority, that they were not foretold; and fo, though granted to be wrought by the Power of the True God, they should signifie nothing to us: For that it hath appeared that many of them were foretold, and yet came to pass. Some Instances I have given of this kind, and might more, but it shall fusfice to say here, that it appears from what Christian Writers have argued in the Case of the Heathen Miracles of their Time, that this Answer would not have been good by any means, nor could not have been thought on by those that then saw the working of Satan. This appears from what was said by the Christians that

that were the most eminent and intelligent of those Days, as Tertullian, Minucius Felix. Tacian and others, to account for the Miracles that were then among the Heathen; namely, "That the Devilvexed and "tormented many, and himself caused their "Difeases, and then gave out that he would "cure them; and it came to pass that they "were cured accordingly; but this not fo " much by any Power that he had to cure "them, as by his ceasing and giving over "to plague them." That this did fufficiently account for the Facts of this kind, I will not fay; but this must be said, That the Facts of this kind were known and undeniable, or these Writers had never gone about to account for them: So that in those Days this Author's Answer could not have been offered at. And again, those Works being many of them done in the Heathen Temples, and they ascribing them to the Power of those Gods at whose Altars and Shrines they were done, who in frequentVifions also gave Directions to and concerning the Means by which they were effected, it is the greatest Absurdity that can be, to impute them to the Power of the True God, who therein must contradict and act against himself and his own Worship; and it likewife, in effect, overthrows the Cause of the True Religion, to think God should give the Power of Miracles for that which

fh

no

th

bu

fh

Pe

D

an

E

cle

fe!

bu

tu

W

D

et

W

hi. G

de

ne vi

0

h

W

which is false. We are therefore to impute these Miracles of the Heathens to their proper Author, i. e. to Satan who had deceived them, and by this kept up his King. dom among them; and this shall not in the least affect the Grounds of the True Religion, nor be a Prejudice to that which hath been established upon Miracles wrought by the Spirit and Power of God; a Power superior in all respects, which hath in several Competitions vanguished and shewn it self above the Power of the Devil, able at any time to bind that strong Power, and spoil it, and dispossess it of its hold, whether in the Bodies or Souls of Men. This is the Anfwer to the Real Miracles among the Heathen; whereof I suppose that more might probably be wrought after Christ's time for a while, as well as that a multitude more were then talked of, than ever did happen. Satan, I suppose, might then set himself with all his Power against the Kingdom of Christ, (and with Permission, for the Power of Christ to appear the greater in its overcoming him) to pull down that which God by Christ had set up, or to keep at least his own Possession in the Heathen World; as well as his Instruments in that respect, to obviate the Christian Pretences of the Divine Power with Christ, might speak a great deal more of the Power and Works of their Idol Deities, and the Wor**fhippers** 

shippers of such, than was true. There is no Reason therefore, I think, to deny that there were Miracles among the Heathen; but there is a manifest Reason why we should deny them to be wrought by the Power of God, as well in reference to the Defence that must be made for the Christian Religion, as in respect not only of the Evidence we have, that those their Miracles were ascribed by the Heathen themselves, to the Deities by them worshipped, but also of the Account which the Scriptures give us of the Devil's Power, and likewise of the Heathen Idols, that they were Devils, and not God.

That Scripture which this Author alledgeth, to have it thought that the Miracles wrought among and by the Heathen, were wrought by the Power of God, is nothing to his Purpose: The Psalmist indeed saith of God, That he is a God that worketh Wonders, and sheweth his Power among the People; but himself interprets his Meaning in the next Verse, Pfal. 77. 14. saying, Thou hast with thine Arm redeemed thy People, the Sons of Jacob and Joseph. That Scripture thereore can never be drawn into consequence or the Miracles in the Gentile World. And that there may be other Ends of Gol's working Miracles, than attesting to the Mission of his Prophets, I see no Reason to eny. But there is no Reason at all in this,

S

t

to infer that God should give the Power for the Miracles that were among the Heathen. Should it be supposed that God hath several Ends in those he worketh, this can never conclude him to be the Author of all

te

ſu

le<sub>1</sub>

he

an

con

Ar

an

bo

the

ob.

one

fun

ma

the to I

rac

Cre

ne i

why

Mei lis

cy (

or ass.

that are wrought.

It may be true, that the Power of God hath fometimes wrought them by Ill Men; but if it has affifted fuch, it has been for the fake, and in the confirmation of his own Truth: And therefore the Consequence is good, that the Christian Religion is true, because God hath wrought Miracles on its behalf; but it does not follow that the Heathen Religion is true, because Miracles have been wrought among and by them, these being the Works of another Power: And even though this be true, that the Miracles among Christians are an Evidence of the Truth of their Religion, as being an Evidence of the Presence of God's Spirit with his Church; yet are Christians concerned, even among themselves, concerned to try the Spirits whether they be of God, and not to believe every Spirit, nor every Pretending Power, there being False Prophets gone out into the World.

But the Rule to try whether the Miracles are of God, and the Miracle-workers have their Power from him, is not their foretelling they should work it; (for which this Author thinks himself here to have gi-

ven fomething of a Reason, when he fays, Essay, That in the Case of its being foreseen and P. 142. foretold, the Instrument is by this also a Prophet, and therefore deferves the Belief he wants, and works the Miracle to obtain) the Scripture supposing of a Prophet that would tempt to Idolatry; (who therefore to be fure is not to be believed, neither can deerve the Credit he wants and feeks) that he might both work a Sign, and also tell and speak of that Sign, and yet it might come to pass, which is the Case in Deut. 13. And as there can be no Reason assigned for in Inference that God, who can restrain both the Miracle-Worker, and also defeat the Prophecy, if he permit the one, must be obliged to defeat the other; but both the one and the other must be left to the Pleafure of God, and to his Will folely, which may permit both, or restrain both: So is there nothing to be faid, supposing a Man to have the Power of God for working Mitacles, why those Miracles should not have Credit with us, though not foretold; why he that hath this Power, should not make alsown use of it, and his own Inference; why God should not be believed, and his Messenger received upon the Evidence of is Power in a Miracle, without a Prophey or Prediction of it, as well as upon and or a Prophecy and Prediction coming to pass, when the Thing foretold is not otherways

•

6

n

25

ie

i-

ch d,

ry

ot d-

ne

ars

eir

ch

gi-

en

ways miraculous, but only as foretold, in which respect every True Prophecy is a Miracle it felf.

Neither is there sufficient ground for such a Conclusion as this, from the Way of the Lord's Prophets, who fometimes have in deed foretold the Miracles they should work, and God's End therein, but at other times have wrought their Miracles, and required to be believed for their Works fake, though they never told before-hand of the Works they wrought; who also from several Circumstances in divers Cases, may seem not to have foreknown whether they should have Power from God for the Work they did, or not. As on the other hand, from feveral Stories of Miracles wrought among and by the Heathen (though by knowing them to be done by the Devil's Power, we are fure they could not be foreknown, nor foretold with certainty by his Agents, inalmuch as the Power affifting them is limited, and under the controll of God's Power): It appeareth, nevertheless, that they have fometimes adventured to foretel, as well as to attempt the doing them, and nevertheless the Event has followed in Miracles that have been by them foretold as well as in fuch as they have attempted without pretending to fortel them.

ge to

na

me Po

Go

he he

42

vaj

La. do faic

ne onl

he

Γĥ

0

lon

ro

0(

is

hol

WI

urt

llec

d

h

27

r-

ot

ld

ey

m

ng

ng

we

or

af-

ed,

):

ive

as

er-

Mi-

old,

ted

his

This Author has at the last rightly observed that the Foreknowledge of Christ in this Matter differed very much from that of his Apostles, Moses, and all other Messergers of God: And our Lord himself has told us, I presume, the Reason, John 3.34 namely, For that God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him. He that was himself the Power of God, in whom the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, could not but know he could at all times work what Miracles he pleased, even as he saith himself, John 11. 12. He knew that the Father heard him always: Infomuch that when he was at that ime upon giving the Word for the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and being about to lo it, lifted up his Eyes to Heaven, and aid, Father I thank thee that thou hast heard ne; He declares himself to have spoke it only because of the People who Stood by, that bey might believe that God had sent him: This giving them a very Reasonable Ground o believe that the Work they should see one, was wrought by the Spirit and Powr of God, whenas they heard him refer it o God, and thank him, as being assured of is Power for the doing it, when they hould fee the Event follow accordingly: Which is a Scripture that would have gone urther than any Thing that this Author has lledged, towards a Proof that some stress night be laid upon a Miracle-Worker's foretelling.

R

e

n

li

n

n

W

b

t

la

L

h

to

2

t

b

n

n

h

telling his Power for the Work; which ye I do not think can give sufficient ground for it to be absolutely concluded, that the Miracle must be foretold, or that Credit is not to be given to it; nor that Credit is to be immediately given to every Miracle that the Worker may foretell : Not the latter, because the Scripture hath no where told us that God will prevent all Miracles that a False Prophet shall take upon him to fore tell: Nor the former; because God's Prophets, and even Christ himself, have wrought them, without foretelling their Power; and moreover have required to be believed for fuch their Works, when there has been nothing told before-hand; nor spoken of their Power. ) But withal 'tis to be considered of all the Lord's Prophets (Jesus Christ excepted ) that they had the Spirit only by measure; and therefore as they could do nothing of themselves, but what God gave them Power for; so they could know no more of what God's Power would affill them to do, than according to the measure of the Gift of God: And therefore as there is no ground for any one to fay, that fuch shall always know what they shall be able to do, and never shall attempt any thing vain; so neither do I believe that it can be made out from what has been done by the Lord's Prophets, that they always did know what they should beable to do; or that the Heve id

he

to

lat

er,

old

re-

0-

ht

for

10-

eir

of

ex-

by do

ave

110

fil

ure

ere

uch

gin

the

iov

eve

never attempted any Thing in vain. Itake the Words of Moses, Numb. 20. v. 10. Must we fetch you Water out of this Rock? to be at least the Expression of one doubting, if not disbelieving his Power to effect the Miracle, though God had told him it should succeed: Otherwise I can give no Account of God's Displeasure with him and Aaron, V. 12. -Because they believed him not, to sanctifie him in the Children of Ifrael upon that Occasion. And as to the Case of our Lord's Disciples that could not disposses the Lunatick, Matth. 17. I fee no Reason to think but that they could not really do it. So fays the Father of him that was vexed with the Devil, - I brought him to thy Disciples, and they could not cure him, ex nown Invar Decamious, ex iyurar; they were not able to do it, fays another Relation. And their own Question to our Lord in private, Why could not we? why had not we Power to cast him out, is a plain Acknowledgment that they were not able to do it, and plainly supposes their having attempted it: The Concourse of People about them, and the Scribes questioning with them at the time of our Saviour's coming by when this Act was in hand, and the running together of the Multitude (which most probably was to see whether Jesus himself had Power to do it) are Circumstances that confirm their attempting it And

rac

he

tur

eve

Na

Spe

ry

bo

¿ ;

" (

for

for

his

ing

Ar

th

be

fur

co

Re

er, for

fol

ni

up it.

wi

W

by

And had they not attemped it, how had they known but they might have done it? Our Lord's answer, that it was because of their Unbelief, let that mean their distrust of the Event, cannot argue that they did not attempt it : But what he further fays, That that kind would be made to go forth by nothing but Prayer and Fasting, is a certain Argument that they did attempt it, and there was fomething wanting in themselves, or they had effected it. And his farther Reasoning upon that Occasion, that if they had Faith to any confiderable degree, they should fay to bat Mountain, be removed, and be cast into the Sea, and it should be done; and nothing should be unpossible to them; methinks should hardly be understood to mean no more than if they had but Faith enough to attempt the doing it, the Thing should be done. I might give a further Instance of some that had the Power of working Miracles given them by Christ himself, who also did work them by the Power given, to testifie to those to whom they preached, that the Kingdom of God was come nigh unto them; who yet by a very Remarkable Circum stance, seem not to have known before-hand themselves the Success of their Power, but to have been in a manner furprized themselves at the greatness of the Event that followed! Which I take to be the Case of the Seventy fent forth by him with the Power of Mi racles racles, into every Place and City whither he himself would come, Luke 10.10. 17. returned again with joy to him, saying, Lord, even the Devils are Subject to us through thy Name.

But I have faid enough to warrant me, to heak what I think, that this Author had very little Reason to say that which he very positively afferts, that " This, i.e. the fore-"telling, ought to make the Difference be-"tween Workers of Miracles above all "other Things whatever. There might be some Reason to think well of him that shall. foretell his Work, and speak before-hand of his Power, and the Event be found accordingly; because it seems to be a fort of an Appeal to God, and one would be apt to think his Power; if it were not God's, might be the rather controuled for this his Prefumption: But as God has not faid, he will controul every fuch False Prophet for this Reason, he is at liberty to permit the Power, and suffer the Presumption. And therefore this is not a Rule that can be of any absolute Certainty to us and there is a more manifest Reason why it must not be depended upon from the several Cases that are against it. That which indeed makes the true Distinction is the Power by which they are wronght, and the Evidences of that Power : When it appears that such Works are wrought by the Spirit and Power of God, they are

S

pear, we may suspend; but whenever we see such Works, we are thus far concerned, to try whether they be of God. And upon this Bottom I make no question, but with God's Help, and the Assistance and Power of his Spirit, to maintain and defend the Truth of Christianity and Revealed Religion.

to book a february of back since will list a

of top ad bloom was bos for on the standard and the standard to the standard t

o holes de man de la

As more selections

to that well of but that of

decided to be a substitute of the substitute of

the Spirit and Power of God, they ere

And the (First) Thing then that I require to be granted me, is, that the Works the Creation, and this VifibleWorld, the Being Of a God: 10. , that the World could be made without a God, is for unreasonable, that I shall not ipend time with him that will go about to deny it; or at least, that will not

## Test January of is and

this I root, will be made up, if God finall give

Have now done with our Author; but whereas in his Preface he seems to have imposed a Task upon him that shall confider what he has written, to give Solutions of the Diffigulties that occur in considering this Article of Miracles, to to give the Unbelieving World the Satisfaction that it thinks wanting in this Cafe T hall endeavour further to represent, in substance at least, the Nature and Strength of the Evidence which Miracles give to Revealed Religion, and the Weakness of those Objections that are made to diminish the Certainty, and lessen the Strength of this Evidence.

In order thereunto I shall lay down some Postulata, which shall be proved as I go, so far as that it shall appear I require nothing without good Reason:

-1103

us > 11 is from thete our Realon does Z 3

And the (First) Thing then that I require to be granted me, is, that the Works of the Creation, and this VisibleWorld, do prove the Being of a God: To think the contrary, that the World could be made without a God, is so unreasonable, that I shall not spend time with him that will go about to deny it; or at least, that will not

grant me,

(Secondly) That what soever is wanting in this Proof, will be made up, if God shall give Visible Signs of his Omnipotent Power either in the Alteration and Change of the Course of Nature, or in producing like Effects to thole we fee in Nature, by his immediate Power, without Natural Means or Causes. He that will say that neither the one nor the other of these are a sufficient Proof of God's Existence, doth make it impossible for God that made the World to give a certain Proof of his Existence to Mankind; if neither the Works of Power and Wonder in the Creation and in Nature, nor the Works of Power and Wonder in the Alteration of the Course of Nature, will be admitted for a certain Proof. As God is a Spirit, he can be only visible to us in the Effects of his Power; we by our Senses cannot discern nor apprehend his Being, otherwife than by fuch Effects of his Power as may be visible to us, and fensibly perceived by us: It is from these our Reason does con-

conclude the Being of a God, because we do little less than see him in such Sensible Effects as we conceive can have no other Cause but a God. I therefore require this to be granted me, that the Works of the Creation are a Proof of the Being of a God, or that at least God may make up this a sufficient Evidence to Mankind hereof. by Vifible Signs of his Omnipotent Power, either in the Alteration and Change of the Course of Nature, or in the Interruption of its Course, or in working without it. If there be any one so much an Atheist as to deny me either the one or the other of these, I shall have nothing to do with him; he makes it impossible for me to give him Conviction; and I do not fee how it is possible for fuch a Man to affign a Way by which he might have Conviction from God himself; which is an Absurdity that I should think the greatest Atheist would be concerned to avoid: For no Man, I am fure, must pretend to Reason, that shall say, if there be a God, he does not desire to be satisfied of the Certainty of his Existence.

But my chief Business at present is with the Deist, who pretends to own the Belief of a God, and to have Conviction of his Existence from the Works of the Creation and this Visible World, but would avoid the Proof of Miracles, and make as though these were never wrought by God for the

Z 3

giving

giving us a Proof of his Existence, and confequently that there is no fuch Certainty in this Proof for the Truth of Religion, as is commonly pretended and given out.

The greatest Objections in this Case that I know, are put together by a late Writer, in a Book Entituled, Tractatus Theologico-Politici, cap. 6. which if I can well answer, I believe it may be easie to solve all other Dif-

ficulties.

on and C That Writer argues thus, -" and his Decrees are unchangeable, and " therefore the Laws of Nature are always "the fame, and cannot be altered; and con-"fequently there is no fuch Thing in reali-"ty as a Miracle, but only Things so cal-" led, the Natural Causes of which we are " not able to explain." This Argument has nothing in it, if we suppose the Alterations in the Course of Nature contained in the Divine Decrees, as most furely they are; that is to fay, that God, who from Eternity defigned the fixing Nature in such a Courfe, designed those Alterations therein which he intended should in time be made, for Ends he intended to ferve thereby. Befides, there are Miracles that are not Interruptions of the Course of Nature, but are Effects produced by the Power of God without the use of Natural Causes; and the Objection does not reach these. But then 'tis faid, "This is to conceive God to have cre-" ated "ated Nature fo weak, and its Laws fo im-" perfect and useless, that himself must assist "it de novo, to have Things succeed ac-"cording to his Pleasure; which is against "Reason to suppose." To which I answer, that 'tis indeed abfurd to suppose that God hath created Nature so weak as that it should not be able to serve all those Ends which he intended to ferve in and by it : But what if God has other Ends to ferve, wherein he shall think fit to employ his own Power, and which he never intended the Course of Nature for? This is not against Reason that he should use his own Power at his pleasure: Nor is this to suppose a Defect in Nature, or in the Power that formed it: If Nature in its Course answer the Ends it was formed for, there is no defect in its Laws; and as the God that made it, might form it according to his Pleasure, so may himself work with it, or work further without it, according to his Pleasure. And even though some Miracles may have Natural Causes, nevertheless there may be still Reason to account them Miracles as brought to pass by Man, if it were above Human Power to employ those Causes for working those Effects: Notwithstanding our conceiving it possible for fuch Effects to be produced by fuch Means, yet if it cannot be conceived possible that a Man should have the command of those Causes, and it be seen nevertheless ZA that

is

t

i

u

1

P

that they operate at his Will, there is a fufficient Reason to conclude the Work miraculous. Let Moses's casting up Ashes in the Air, which became a Boil breaking out upon the Ægyptians; and the Strong East-Wind bringing up the Locusts, with the Strong West-Wind removing them; and Elisha's stretching himself upon the Child which he restored to Life; and our Saviour's making Clay of his Spittle, and anointing the Blind Man's Eyes, and bidding him go wash, upon which he was restored to Sight, &c. let these, with others of this kind, be the Instances, since they are insisted upon; yet inasmuch as it was not in Man's Power to employ these Causes in Nature for such Effects; as not in Moses, for Instance, to cause the East-Wind to blow for bringing up the Locusts, when he foretold their coming; nor in him to employ the West-Wind for their removal; therefore though the Caufe it felf might have been possibly sufficient for the Effect, the Work notwithstanding must be acknowledged miraculous: How much more in those Instances where the Means used were not such as could be conceived in Nature able to produce the Effects? as, for the Askes cast up into the Air, to become immediately a Boil breaking out with Blains upon Man and upon Beaft, throughout all the Land of Ægypt; and Elisha's stretching himself upon the Body of the Dead Child to bring bring Life into it; and the Clay made of Spittle by our Lord, for restoring the Blind to Sight: If Natural Causes act out of their Course, or are made use of to produce Effects which in their Nature they neither would, nor could, there is the same Reason to think that the God of Nature worketh and employeth them, as there is to think, if we see Essects of his Power without any use at all of them, that such Things are of his immediate doing.

So that as for this Subtile Objector's In-"finuation, "That all Miracles have Caufes "in Nature, though not known to us; for "that some appear to have, although their "Circumstances and Causes are not related "in Scripture;" it's no Consequence: It must be said, that all Miracles have their Causes in Nature, because we may have ground to conjecture that some have; neither will it follow presently that those are no Miracles which may be found to have a Natural Cause; for if so be that Cause was not in its Nature proper for the Effect, or if such Causes are found to operate out of their Natural Way, at the Direction of a Man appointing them, who cannot be supposed to have them at his Command, without assistance from the Power of the God of Nature, the Work must be acknowledged miraculous, as being fuch as could not have been brought to pass in the Circumstances and

e

r

r

h

n

r

nș 11

g

g

C

in

th

W

CE

bl

fre

ed

Ac

be

if

fig

0

M

les

di

Pa

th

ing

up

div

at

Ar

the

th

bei

cai

bei

for

bei

wh

and Manner it was, without God. And as for the Reflection which herein is cast upon the Scripture, as though that should conceal the Causes in Nature which such Things had, to make them believed to be Miracu. lous Works, when really they were not, it's a meer Calumny; for the very Instance whence he endeavours to conclude this, viz. The Return of the Waters of the Red Seaup. on the Agyptians, which in Exod. c. 14. v. 17. is faid to have come to pass upon Moses's stretching out his hand, without mention of the Wind, which caused the return of the Waters; of which we hear, c. 15. v. 10. - Thou dift blow with thy Wind, and the Sea covered them This very Instance is an Argument directly against himself, and must convince any Reasonable Man of the Maliciousness, as well as Falsehood of his Traducing Infinuation, "That " this Circumstance was concealed in the "Historical Relation, to make the Miracle " feem the greater." Can that Holy Writer be supposed to have a Design to conceal in one Place what himself relates in the other? Whom should he design to conceal it from? Not furely from those who saw the Action, and confequently knew the Circumstances of it; for if 'twere to be supposed that they might not observe them, 'tis nevertheless plain that the Holy Writer never intended to conceal any of those Circum-**Stances** 

1

S

S

e

1

1-

1,

y

ft

le

e-

at

ne le

1-

al

18

it

he

n-

ed

e-

n-

es

stances from them: For Meses caused the Children of Israel to bear a part with him in that Song, which makes the mention of this Circumstance, which this Caviller would pretend to have been designedly concealed: Neither could the Historian possibly defign to conceal this Circumstance from Polterity, for that the Song is delivered together with, and is a part of the Hiflory: So that the Scripture Writer must be supposed not to have had Common Sense, if he can be suspected to have had any Defign to conceal that Circumstance, as this Objector would pretend. And withal, the Miracle is the same for greatness, that Moles should have a Wind at his command to divide the Waters of the Red-Sea in Two Parts, for the Children of Israel to pass through, and a Wind again upon the firetching forth his Hand, to cause them to return upon the Agyptians; as if the Waters had divided and returned again to their Current at his Word, and there had been no Wind: And therefore there could be no Defign in the Historian to conceal this Circumstance, that the Miracle might seem the greater; that being the same, whether it were a Wind that caused it, or otherwise; that which did it, being not at the command of him that performed the Miracle by it, and this in it felf being not a sufficient Cause for that Work which was done thereby. And

" 1

"t

""

" a

1 1

t

"

20

t

"a

b

F

tl

0

"tl

lopl

ted,

and

iny to b

unle

be f

And

inst

the

« ways

And what this Objector would further argue from the Scripture Way of speaking, namely, "That it often takes no notice of "the immediate Causes from whence Es. " fects proceed, but ascribes to God Things "that are generally known to have Caufes " in Nature," shall never ferve his Purpose. For that the Scripture may with Reason ascribe all Natural Events and Effects to God, who ruleth all the whole Course of Nature, and directeth and governeth the fame by a Wife and Good Providence, to Ends of his own appointment, and in this direct Men to look up to God as the Author of all; wherein, however, it does not fpeak fraudulently, nor fuggest any Falle Notion; all the other Causes that are, being Instruments only in the Hand of his Provi-This therefore can never argue that the Scripture should conceal the Natural Causes of Things designedly, to have it thought that God should do Extraordinary Works of Wonder and Power.

Neither shall the Scripture Relation of Matters of this kind be invalidated, by what this Bold Writer has taken upon him to say further, viz. "That Men upon seeing or hearing any New Thing, without special care, are apt to give Relations thereof according to their own Opinions, especially in Things above their Capacity or Under"standing; so that what they say is not al-

of

f. 55 .e.

n

0

of

10

0

is

u-

ot lse

ng /i-

at

ral it

ry

nat

fay

01

ia

ac

lly

er-

ays

"ways to be depended on: Of which we "have, he fays, an Instance in Scripture, "which relates a Miracle without regard to "Truth, speaking to the Apprehension of "the Vulgar, and to raise their Admiration, faying, That the Sun stood still on that day when Joshua fought the five Kings, "and pursued them, &c. Josh. 10. v. 12. whereas the thing only was, that Day was longer than usual: There could be no " faying with Truth, the Sun stood still more then than at other times, for that it never moveth : But the Hebrews, he will have it, adapted this Miracle to their own Conceptions, having an use to make thereof against the Gentiles, who worshipped the Sun, whom they could by this means better argue against, that the God of the Hebrews was the greater, who could flay that Sun in his Course, which the Nations round about them accounted to be "their God." For as to what other Philo-Sophers and Chronographers may have relaed, as he fays, without regard to Truth, and agreeably to their own Opinions; if my such Things were, the Scripture is not to be called in question upon that Score, unless the like Falshood and Weakness could be found and detected in this as in them: And that the Scripture hath spoken in the Inflance mentioned, with more regard to he Opinions of the Vulgar, than to Truth, 19

is more than he or any one elfe can certain. ly tell; for there has been no Demonstration as yet made that I know of, that the Sun never moves, nor that the Earth does. But even if this were granted, the Miracle would not be one jot the lefs; for those Philosophers who pretend to have found out that the Sun does not move, do nevertheless own that the Earth conftantly does move round upon its own Axis, and that this its Motion causes the Day and Night; fo that the Earth, at least, at that time must have flood still; which must have been an equal Evidence of the Lord's hearkening to the Voice of a Man for the good of his People, and would have made the Miracle the fame it was, no day having been like it after or before. And for the particular Use which the Hebrews might make of this Matter against the Nations about them, who worshipped the Sun, whence he feeks to raife a Suspicion of a defigned Mifrepresentation, Where does he find either that the Scripture make any fuch Use of this Fact, or that the He brews themselves ever did? Neither is there any possible way of accounting for the Case, but that it must appear to be a Miss cle: That Conceit of this Writer, this there might be a greater Refraction that ordinary from the Hail that had fallen the day, will never account for it, no morethan his Parhelion will for the going back of the Su

i

1

t

j

(

T

4

n

d

)-

at

S

re

its

lat

ve

ial

he

le,

me

be-

the

ped ici-

ere

kes

He

nere the

ira

tha

tha

th

tha

f-th Su

" than

Sun in the days of Hezekinh at the Word of God's Prophet; which must be thought miraculous, whether we will have it to be the Sun or the Earth that moves. Why it should be supposed that the Scripture Writers should go about to impose upon the whole Fewish Nation in Things to easie to have been contradicted or discovered, if there had been no more therein than the Conjecture of this Writer Supposeth; and why the Jews should be thought so credulous above the rest of Mankind, as to take Things altogether upon Truft, and not make use of Common Sense in the examination of Matters of this kind, will be hard to fay; and till some Reason be given, the Conjecture is foolish and abfurd.

But the Scripture Style, he fays, is in many places Poetical. That may be, but there is Truth always in its Narratives, and in this Case of Miracles the Poetical Relation helped that Objector to the knowledge of a Circumstance which he would pretend the Historian intended to conceal: The Objection therefore is made with so much the less Reason in this Case. And whereas the Objector has taken upon him further to say, "That when the Scripture saith, The "Lord would make the Earth barren for the Iniquities of Men, or that the Blind were cured by Faith; we are to understand no "other, nor be no more concerned thereat,

"than when it faith God is angry, or grieved, " or offended at the Sins of Men, or that he "repented him of his Word, or of what he " had done, or that he remembred his Pro-"mife, &c. which are also spoken Poetically, " or according to the Opinions of the Wri-" ter, or of the Vulgar and Common Peo-" ple:" I absolutely deny him the Advantage of any fuch Inference; for that the Scripture it self hath given us a Description of the Divine Nature, that will oblige to the taking the latter Expressions as Metaphorical, and adapted to the Apprehensions of Men, who are not able to form True Conceptions of God's Actions, who is a Spirit, otherwise than by resembling them to the Actions of Men : But the Scripture hath nowhere left the least Intimation to us; nor is there any Reason that the Works of Wonder and Power done by God out of the Way of Nature, should not be accounted his doing; for even as to those of this kind, that Natural Causes may seem to have been used in, the Circumstances related thereof will force us to acknowledge, that fuch Things however could not have come to pass in Nature, the Time and Circumstances considered, and consequently are to be ascribed to the Special Operation of God; even that of the Barrenness of the Earth (which hath many times come to pals, no doubt, in the Way of Nature) had a Mira

O

cle in it, when caused by the Drought in the days of Elijah; not that indeed it was a Miracle that the Earth should be barren when there fell no Rain upon it; but this was a Miracle, That the Prophet should say there should be no Dew nor Rain those years, but according to his word, I Kings 17. I. and the Event should answer.

What this Objector further fays, of the Scripture's speaking of Things as real which were only Representations to the People's Imagination, shall be little to his surpose also. For as to the Instance given, of its faying that God descended upon Mount Sinai, the Expression of the Lord's escending upon the Mount in Fire, is adaptd, I grant, to Man's Capacity, who othervife could not fenfibly apprehend God's Presence; and the Scripture Account of the Nature of God giveth Reason for its being hus understood; this telling us, that God lleth Heaven and Earth; what is spoken onsequently of his locally descending, is ot to be literally understood. Nevertheels, the Things in that Representation were eal, not imaginary; the Mountain, that is o fay, burnt with Fire; the Thunder and ightnings, and the shaking of the Mount, vere real, and the created Voice by its ound really heard; those Things were not naginary, which were fo terrible to the eople, and even to Moses himself. this Aa

ì

r

-

e.

S

d,

n

of

h

to

n-

be

d;

th

nd

ra-

Ele

this Representation of God's Presence by these miraculous Appearances of Fire from Heaven, Thundrings, and a terrible Voice, and fhaking of the Earth, coming to pass according to the Word of Moles, who told the People thereof, in what manner, and at what time and place the God of Heaven would talk with them, and give them a Law: is as clear an Evidence as can be defired, that the Operations were miraculous, and were the Effects of the Divine Power, and proceeded not from any Natural Causes, So likewise asto the Chariot of Fire in which Elijah was taken up to Heaven, it was an Apparition formed by God's Spirit, visible to the Senses of Elisha, and not a Reprefentation only in his Fancy and Imagination: And as there was further a Real Operation of God's Spirit in taking Elijah away from the Earth, and carrying him up to Heaven, it was no delufory Act: And no doubt Elisha himself understood as much of it as any of the Sons of the Prophets, who came to meet him after his Master was taken from him; that is to fay, that it was the Spirit of the Lord in that Apparition, that had taken him away; and tis a fign that he understood it better than they, when he refused to let them send after him; and afterwards, upon their importunity, did fuffer them to fend out to feek after him, to convince them rather than himself, that he y

m

e,

s ld

nd

en

V;

d,

nd

nd es.

ch

an

reti-

oe-

ay to

no

of ho

ta-

vas

on,

gn

ien

ind

did

to

he

129

Therefore this Instance cannot be drawn into Consequence neither, to argue that the Scripture speaks of Things as Real Miracles, which were only Imaginary.

As to fome Prophetical Expressions of the Prophets, the Observation is right, That those are not to be taken literally: For Instance, when Ifaidb prophetying of the De-Aruction of Babylon, cap. 13. v. 10. describes the Wrath of God by these Expressions; The Stars of Heaven and the Constellations thereof shall not give their light; the Sun shall be darken'd in his going forth, and the Moon shall not cause her light to shine! This is not to be understood literally, as if these flrange Things should actually come to pass; but that there should be as great a Terror when God should punish this City for its Wickedness, as if such strange Sights were actually feen in the Heavens. The Phrase and Stile of the Prophets is known to be generally Metaphorical and Allegoried; so that their Meaning is not presently to be taken from the Literal Sense of their Words, but to be fought after in the Senfe of the Prophet, and judged of from the Matter which the Prophet is describing. The Cafe is quite otherwise as to the Histofical Narrations in Scripture, wherein we have Accounts of Matters of Fact done in the Sight and Prefence of the People, and attost-Aaz

attested by those who saw them done. To Suppose here the Scripture-Writers might speak of things otherwise than they were. or use Phrases to make the Things thought other than they were, is most absurd, unless any thing of this nature could be detected in the Scripture, which hitherto there has not. And to draw fuch an Inference from this Metaphorical Expression in Scripture, God's opening the Windows of Heaven. whereof the Meaning is, that there was a great deal of Rain, is most ridiculous. For, according to the Letter, that Expression can have no meaning, there being no Windows that we know there; it must of neceffity therefore be taken Metaphorically, to have any Meaning. And though the Flood of Waters were Miraculous, yet it cannot be pretended, that the Scripture feeks to have it so thought from this Expression, the Windows of Heaven being opened; but rather from the thing meant therein, i. e. the Rain that fell upon the Earth for forty Days and forty Nights, the abundant and long-continued Rain, and the prevailing of the Waters upon the Earth to that degree, that all the high Hills that were under the whole Heaven, and the Mountains, were covered. For the Scripture it felf explains, that it meant, by the Windows of Heaven being opened, nothing more than the falling of abundance of Rain, Gen.

1

Gen. 7. V. 11, 12. and more plainly, Cap. 8. v. 2. when the Flood abating, it faith, the Windows of Heaven were stopped, immediately thus explaining its Expression, and the Rain from Heaven was restrained. Hence therefore to conclude that Credit is not to be given to the Scriptures in its Relation of Miracles, is as abfurd, as to fay, that an Author is not to be believed in any thing he faith, if he hath ever used a Metaphor. Surely in the Writings of Scripture, as in all other Writings, Common Sense will enable us to distinguish when an Expression is Metaphorical, and when otherwise; when to be taken in the Literal, when in a Metaphorical Sense.

And as for what is further Argued, that there can be no fuch Things as Real Miracles, the Scripture it felf faying in effect, that God hath fo fixed the Course of Nature, as that it is immovable and unchangeable: God hath indeed established the Heavens, the Sun and Moon, and the whole Course of Nature, by a Decree which shall not pass away, Pfal. 148. v. 6. He hath given them a Law which shall not be broken; which these shall not transgress, that is. But shall this hinder the Almighty from fulfilling his other Decrees, or from defigning or making Alterations in these to fulfil them? He hath given to these, Ordinances which shall not depart, as the Prophet Jere-

3-

h

1-

e-

at

re

nit

nre

n,

en.

Aa3

miah

miab speaks, cap. 31. v. 35. and it is by that Decree and Ordinance that the Heavens and the Earth remain as they were from the beginning: But shall this overthrow that which the same Prophet says, cap. 32. v. 20. of God's Extraordinary Works, his Signs and Wonders shewn in the Land of Ægypt, and in Israel, and amongst Men, for the making himself a Name? The Preacher hath said, — There is no new Thing under the Sun: Shall this argue that God can do no New Thing by his Extraordinary Power? Or what if it be said, it is no New Thing for the

Ecelef. 1.

of Nature, or to work without, or another way than Nature does? He faith also, that Cap 3. 1. God hath ordained all Things their Time; and if there be a Time for all Things, why

should there not be thought a Time appointed by God for his Miraculous Works, the occasions of which must be supposed by him foreseen? He says also of God's doing,

Power of God to alter or change the Course

Ver. 14. That it shall be for ever, and nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, and he doth it that Men should fear before him. Doubtless this doth not limit the Power of God, but that he may do his great Works and Wonders, that his People may fear him.

This, that the World is stable, and shall not is chron. be moved, is a Reason indeed for all the Earth to fear him; But this, that the Lord is great, and hath done Marvellous Works, is

Sussemin :

a Rea-

a Reason why he is to be feared above all Ibid. v. Gods. 'Tis plain there is no Contradiction in these Scriptures; and therefore what is spoken concerning God's establishing the Heavens, &c. by a perpetual Decree, cannot be drawn into Consequence against the Truth of what is said of his Miracles and his Acts, wherein he hath shewn his Great-Deut. 11. ness, his mighty Hand, and his stretched-out v. 2 and 3. Arm.

There is a greater Objection, I confess, had it been made out, in what that Writer took upon him to fay and shew, namely, "That from Miracles we can neither know "the Essence, nor Existence, nor Provi-"dence of God; but on the contrary, "these are far better known from the fixed "and unchangeable Order of Nature." This indeed is true, that the Invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly feen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead: This is what God's Revelation it felf hath told us, whose Truth is built upon Miracles. Nevertheless, Miracles are an additional Proof and Conviction, which diminish nothing of the Evidence that is in the other, but add thereto, and give a further Evidence; as from what we fee in fuch Works, of a Power able to work beyond Nature, we have Reason to conclude this Almighty Power to have Aa 4

he

m.

of

rks

m.

not

the

15

lea-

been the Cause of the Things that are in Nature, and that these were not the Effect of a Fate and ftrong Necessity, but the Works of an infinitely Wife and Almighty Power, which still worketh in the World according to its Pleasure; and consequently, that as on this we are continually dependent, this ought to be our Praise, and also our Fear. This can no way shake, but rather fix Mens Notions concerning God's Existence, when besides the Effects in Nature, that lead us to believe an Omnipotent Power, there are known to be other Effects that could not be from Chance, or Accident, or any Visible Cause, but must be from some Power Invisible and Supernatural; whence it cannot but be concluded, that there is a God, and that his Power is Infinite.

a

1

n

N

N

th N

VE

A

N

W

tei

ce

h

But 'tis said a "Miracle is a limited "Work, and so can never shew any Power "but what is particular and limited; and "therefore we cannot thence conclude the "Existence of a Cause whose Power is In"finite: Whereas from Nature, which pro"ceeds on to an Infinity, and sort of Eter"nity, Men might in some measure con"clude the Infinity, Eternity, and Immu"tability of God." To this I answer, that there is so little Certainty in what the Reason of Man, being left to it self, might conclude concerning the Divine Nature, from the Infinity, and sort of Eternity of

the Things in Nature, that some have from a Supposition of the World's being Eternal, concluded against the Being of a God: But fuch may have Conviction that their Notion must needs be false, from the working of God's Power beyond and out of the Way of Nature; from whence likewife the Infinity of God's Power, and the Eternity thereof may be as well and better argued, as these Works shew his Power able to act beyond Nature, and without it at his Pleafure: His working Wonders as he pleafeth, must shew a more Infinite, as well as a greater Power than is shewn in Nature: and that which sheweth the Infinity will also argue the Eternity of his Power; for that which is above all other, can never be destroyed by any other. This, however, is a needless Argument, for we are not left from Miracles to conclude or judge of the Divine Nature, but Miracles are an Attestation that those Prophets who have come in the Lord's Name, have come from him, to make a Revelation of his Will and of his Nature to us: And it has pleased God so to discover his Nature, and his Providence to us in his Word, that I am fure it never can be pretended that Men from Reason and Natural Light ever attained such right and just Conceptions of the Eternal Being before, nor hat they ever understood any thing near o much of the Way of his Providence, or

e

le

1-

ut

at

ed

nd he

In-

ro-

er-

on-

nu-

ver,

the

are, of

the

Truth

or of the Goodness and Justice there.

T

G

po kı

W

de

el

m

de

fe

ot.

ta

of

th

hi

no

E

th

th

th

with

di

he

ha

its

gi Pr

if th

ra

But this Objector goes about further to infinuate, that " even the Scripture its " felf does in effect fay, that from Mira. " cles we cannot come to the knowledge of "God; this we must not expect it to say " plainly, but'tis easie to conclude so much "from what it does fay : For Moses com-" mandeth, Deut. 13. that they should put " to death a feducing False Prophet, though "he should work Miracles to persuade " them to go after other Gods. " fays he, it follows that Miracles may be "wrought by False Prophets, and that Men, " unless well confirm'd in the True Know-"ledge and Love of God, may as foon " from Miracles follow False Gods as the "True." 'Tis not unlikely indeed, that if Men do not enquire into the Power that worketh them, they may be seduced to go after False Gods, by the Miracles which False Prophets may work. Nevertheless, as all Miracles give a Proof of some Invisible Power, which is the first Step towards the Belief of a God; and as God hath shewed his Miracles with a purpose that his People should know that he was the Lord, Exod. 10. 2. I cannot conceive how, or upon what grounds it should be imagined, that those Signs should be no certain Evidence by which they might know the Lord. The Truth

S

y

h

it

h

e

ne n,

vn

iè

if

at

0

h

as

le

10

is

le

0.

at

(e

y

e

Truth of the Case is this, there had been a Proof already made by Miracles, and by God's Superiority of Power shewn in a Competition of Miracles, by which this People knew that God was the Lord, and that there was none like him among the Gods, doing Wonders, Exod. 15. 11. and that there was none else besides bim, Deut. 4. 35. It was this made it reasonable that they should put to death the False Prophet that should seek to feduce them by Miracles to the Worship of other Gods. And that Way which Satan had taken to deceive the World into an Opinion of his Divinity, had made it necessary that the True God should shew his Power above him in doing Wonders, that Mankind might not be deceived by the Operations of that Evil and Wicked Spirit, and seduced from the True God that made the Heavens and the Earth. And this People who had feen that there were different Powers that wrought Wonders, but that the Power of their God was above all other, could and did controul the other, had Reason not to hearken to any other Power but that which had given them a sensible Demonstration of its being the Superior; and therefore had it given them in charge, not to hearken to any Prophet, though shewing Signs and Wonders, if he fought to draw them after other Gods; they having been made to know by the Miracles and mighty Acts of Wonder and Pow-

Pe

ap

re

ki

D

be

N

fti

no

kı

do

W

I

D

W

th

C

ar

ar

th

to hi

hi

th

an

by

fir

to

to

fu

Pea-

er which had been done among them, that there could be none so great a God as their God. This therefore can never justly impeach the Evidence of Miracles, from which this People had the advantage of feeing the Power of God, and of knowing his Power greater than any other, and thereby knowing for certain that their God was the only True God. Of which that Objector feems to have been aware, and therefore durst not absolutely say, that from Miracles Men might as foon bebrought to the belief of a False God, as of the True; but puts in his unless well confirmed in the true knowledge and love of God. But what was it that did or could confirm them in the knowledge of the True God, and in the Love of him, but the Evidences they had feen in his Miraculous Works, of the greatness of his Power above all others, and the great Things he had done for them thereby?

His Observation, That "the Israelites, "after so many Miracles, could not there" by form any just Conceptions of God; "but that when Moses was gone from them but a little while, they required of Aaron to make them Gods to go before them, and worshipped the Molten Calf"; is rather an Argument of the greater necessity of Miracles, and of a Revelation built thereon, to reduce Mankind to the Worship of the One True God; since even a

People that had feen his Miracles, was thus apt to fall into the Idolatrous Way of the rest of the World. Had the rest of Mankind had other and better Notions of a Deity than this People, there might have been fomething in the Argument; but the Nations all about them, were much more stupid than these. Withal, this People had not yet feen all the Works of the Lord, nor known the Marvels, fuch as had not been done in all the Earth, nor in any Nation: which yet remained to be done, Exod. 34. 10. neither had they full Instructions in the Divine Law as yet. And besides, what was it that gave Moses the Authority with them, that they fuffered his breaking their Calf in pieces, and stamping it to Powder, &c. and submitted to all that hethought fit to do and require of them in that matter; but the Miracles which he had before wrought to shew that God was with him? And by his further Works, and the Instruction of his Law built upon his Miracles, was it that this People was made to know the Lord, and brought off from their Idolatrous Way; by this were they redeemed from Ægypt, from the Nations and their gods, and confirmed to the True God, to be a People unto him for ever, 2. Sam. 7. 24.

V

S

t

n

2

13

id

or

ne

ne

us

ve

ne

es,

re-

d;

em

ron

m,

ra-

ity

orn a The Evasion, by which that Writer seeks to avoid the Evidence which the Scripture supposeth in Miracles, when it relates God's

decla-

declaring his Purpose of using them, that his People might know that he was the Lord. Exod. 10. 2. mamely, "That they might " be proper to convince the Hebrews, who " had particular Notions; but not the reft " of Mankind, as not having any ground "in the common and universally received "Notions of Mankind; will not ferve his "Turn." For the Scripture faith, that God defigned to make Pharaoh know hereby, that he was God, and that there was none like bim in all the earth, Exod. 9. 14. and faith moreover of God's raifing up Pharach, to oppose and obstinately withstand the Power of God in Miracles, which gave the greater Opportunity for shewing the Divine Power; that he did this that his Name might be declared throughout all the earth, v. 16. And that Miracles are a fitted Proof to the general and common Notions of Mankind, there needs no greater an Argument than the Behaviour of the Heathenish People at Lystra, Acts 14.11. who when they faw the great Miracle that St. Paul had wrought in the Cure of the Man that had been a Cripple from his Mother's womb, presently cried out, that the Gods were come down to them in the likeness of Men, and ran immediately with their Priest to do Sacrifice.

I

F

t

c V a

n

C

d

å

tl

e

What is faid further, of "Solomon and for forme others not having a right Notion of God's

"God's Providence, tho' they had known "his Miracles, is very little to the purpole. He indeed, and others, found Difficulties in the Methods of Providence, which they knew not how well to account for; particularly in this, that in the ordinary Difpenfations of Providence there appeared no Distinction made between the Righteous and the Sinner , all things came alike to all, and there was one Event ( fo far as his Observation reached) to the Righteous and to the Wicked: But their Notions of a Providence nevertheless were more certain than any the Heathens had; who knew so little of it, that feveral of their Philosophers deny'd it abfolutely, as a Work that must make God uneafy, and take off from his Felicity; others thought it not confistent with his Leisure or Greatness: And those that were more right in their Conjectures, could however come at but little Certainty. Whereas the Revelation of Mases had so far affisted the Hebrews, that they knew it should be well with them that feared God, Ecclef. 8. 12. and that it should not be well with the wicked, though his Days were prolonged, and Sentence was not prefently executed against every Evil Work. What Understanding they had in this Matter, they ascribe to Revelation, they understood it in the Sanctuary of God. 'Tis confessed however, that so full a Revelation of God's Provi-

o

1

e

1

13

be

f-

0-

er he

lat

he

10-

the

res

leir

and

of od's

f

a

de

Providence was not made under the Jewish Dispensation, as has been now made in the Gospel: wherein the Particular Providence of God, extending to the least of his Creatures, is discovered to us, and the Goodness and Justice of that Providence made more manifest. The Jews also, some of them, had mistaken Notions of Providence, as they thought it concerned for them particularly as Abraham's Seed; not confidering that the Regard which God had to Abraham in the Promise made to his Seed, was joined with an Expectation, that the Seed of Abraham, who was himself faithful, would keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord might accordingly bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him, Gen. 18. 19. Wherein they degenerating, were not truly Abraham's Children, and therefore misapplied the Promise to his Seed, in crying up themselves for the People for which God's Providence must be concerned. Thus far however they were right in their Notions, as they conceived God's Providence to have a special Regard to those that fear God, and work Righteousness: Which indeed is the ground of all Religious Worship and Service, the End of our Prayers, the Promise of God in his Word, the Expectation of all that hope in him, and fear before him: Not so much indeed as to the Things of this Life, now under the

the Gospel, where we are made Partakers of a better Hope; but even now, though the Providence of God be fo fully manifested, as that 'tis certain there is no respect of Persons with him, but in every Nation he that feareth him is accepted of him; and likewife certain that he is kind to the Unthankful and the Evil, yet is his Providence more particularly concerned for them that fear before him. This Notice of a Providence. and the Way of it, is owing to the Revelation depending upon, and confirmed by Miracles, and therefore 'tis unjustly pretended that these should give Men Perplexed and falle Notions of God and his Provinaving Gods made to gobelore them; and .sons

What this Objector fays as to Miracles aving their Origine and first Rise from the fews, "who that they might perfuade the Nations about them, who worshipped the Sun, Moon, Earth, Water, Air, and other Visible Gods, that these their Gods were weak, inconstant and mutable; and under the Power of a God Invisible, which they pretended to be their God, gave out Stories of Miracles, by which they endeavoured also to shew, that all Nature (being at the command of the God they worshipped) was ordered and directed to their particular good and benefit; which was a Fancy fo pleasing to that People, that to this Day they have not left off pre-

le

le.

e

re

ed

to

s:

71-

ur

rd,

m,

ed

der

he

" pretending to Miracles, that themselves "might be thought the only People of God, " and the final Cause for the fake of which "God must be believed to have created the "World, and to order the Course thereof." All this is no more than Talk without any manner of Reason: The particular Folly of the Jews we are not concerned with, but that they feigned Miracles with fuch Defigns, has no manner of Proof: That the Nations about them worshipped the Sun, Moon, &c. is true, and the People of Ifrael were inclinable to the same Way, or something worse, as appears from their setting up their Molten Calf, they themselves were for having Gods made to go before them; and therefore twas not likely they should devise and invent Stories of Miracles, to persuade the Nations of the Power of a God Invisible. Truth is, the rest of the Nations and they also were fallen to Idolatry, and this made it necessary for the God of Heaven to give a Revelation of himself, and to shew his Power in Miracles; which that he really did, we have a Testimony unquestionable, derived to us through several Ages, from that People whom he took from amidst the other Nations, by Signs, and Wonders, and Miracles, that they might be called after his Name.

frou

ti

ii

0

es

d,

he

ny

of ut

le\_

he in,

ael

ieup

or

reinti-

he

ey

ive

his

lly

le,

mo

he

nd

ter

erd

There is yet another Thing faid against the Evidence of Miracles, which is, that these are above our Understanding; and from that which exceeds our Understanding and Apprehension, we can conclude nothing certain. To which this is a sufficient Answer, that it's not above our Understand-ing, to conclude, that every Effect has a Cause; therefore when we see an Effect which has no Visible Cause, we conclude it the Work of some Power invisible, and are at as much Certainty in making the Inference, as we can be in the way of reason-ing from the Effect to its Cause. We do not understand indeed the Way and Manner of God's working in Miracles, neither do we understand as to many Things whose Causes we see in Nature, the Way and Manner of their Operation; yet we account our selves to be at a Certainty in our Reasonings concerning them.

Tis further objected, That he that believes upon the Score of Miracles, will be hable to suspect Inchantment, or some other Fraud. This might indeed be an Objection, if there were not a Way and Means to distinguish the Power of God from the Power of the Devil. But as God has shewn his Power superior to all other Powers, and is supposed to have given (in the Revelation established upon a Demonstration of his Power) Rules, whereby his Power may be known

known from others, the Force of this Obje. ction is taken off; at least it will be taken off when the Supposition shall be made

good.

And now if by all this Argument I have To far removed Mens Prejudices, that these Postulata be granted me, which any Ratio nal unprejudic'd Man would have granted at the first, -- viz. That the Works of the Creation and this Visible World are a sufficient Proof of the Being of a God: Or (Secondly) that should we suppose any thing wanting in that Proof, Miracles which are Visible Signs of an Invisible Omnipotent Power, will make it up, and put God's Existence beyond question with us: I desire no more at present, only providing that these Proofs be not inverted, so as to be turned one against the other (for that will run us to a manifest Absurdity; that is to fay, that it shall not be possible for God himself to give Conviction of his Existence to Men that are so weak, or foolish, or blinded with Prejudice, as not to conclude his Existence from the Works of Nature): If thus much be gained, it is all I defire as yet; and I hope all Objections and Prejudices may be thus far removed.

I (Thirdly) will suppose upon our having admitted God to be, that it's possible for God to reveal himself and his Will to Mankind otherwise than he has done in the

Works

b

t

d

te

g

V

W

be

W

at

G

fo

th

kr

fo

T

th

Works of Nature: 'No Man, I imagine, will in this oppose me, but that God may find Means and Ways for this, and that the Ways by which the Scripture tells us this has been done, are fuch as God might poffibly do this by. The Prophetical Influence cannot be thought impossible, there being no Reason, I will be confident, to be given, but that the Souls of Men are as capable of converfing with Truth made known to us by an Influx of the Divine Mind upon our Understandings, as they are with any gathered from fensible and external Objects, and the Notions thereof brought into us by our Senses. For as our Sensations carry the Notions of Material Things to our Understandings, which before were unacquainted with them, fo there can be no Reason given why there should not be some Analogical Way whereby the knowledge of Divine Truth may also be revealed to us. And why it should not be thought there might be as certain a Way of our being acquainted with the one as with the other, I cannot fee; at least why it should not be thought that God, who contrived the Nature of our Souls so as that we may converse with one another, and inform one another of things we knew not before, should have left a Way alfo for himself to communicate yet more Truth to the Souls of Men, if he pleafeth, than he hath engraven upon their Under-**Standings** Bb 3

ıt

it

e

od

ce

or

de

): as u-

12-

ole

to

he

rks

r

ā

V

1

t

t

r

1

t

t

r

b

h

h

1

standings at the first. It shall never there-. fore be pretended impossible for God to give our Minds Impressions from himself of Things which naturally they are unacquainted with: And if the Weakness of Man's Mind be fuch as that in the Thoughts of us who are Strangers to the Prophetical Influence, the ftrongest Impression within is not to be depended on with fo much certainty as a Reafonable Man would defire; it shall not be thought impossible for God to give of himself such Signs, together with the Influence, or fuch other Signs in condescension to our Weakness, as we our selves may defire, fufficient to convince, and fatisfie, and give affurance to the Mind bleffed with fuch a Revelation: Both which Ways the Scripture has given us Instances of, viz. of Apparitions and Representations at the time of the Prophetical Influx, which awakened and quickened the Prophet into a lively Sense of the Divine Majesty appearing to him: (Thus it was when God first appeard to Moses in the Bush that burnt with Fire): And again, of God's making mention of Signs himself, and giving Signs at the desire of the Prophet, when the Weakness of his Nature required, or perhaps defired a Sign, (as in the Vision that Abraham had, Gen.15. 8. when he faid to God, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit this Land? I will

centhusi

I will now (Fourthly) assume, That a Divine Inspiration convey'd to any one Man, primarily benefits none but himself, must rest in his Private Use, no one else having advantage from it. The Reason is manifest, which is this; A bare Inspiration can only fatisfie the Mind of him who has it of its Authority and Authenticalness: 'Tis possible indeed there may be fo much Reafonableness in the Thing it self, as that by Moral Arguments it may be fufficient to beget a Belief (or an Assent rather I should call it) in the Minds of fober and good Men; but all this while it cannot certainly be known to be a Revelation, because what seems reafonable to us, when proposed and told us, we may well judge another Man of greater Thought may come to think of himself, as being reasonable by the working of his Rational Faculties. And therefore that one Man may know that another hath that Truth revealed to him by a Prophetical Spirit, which he delivers as fuch, it is reafonable that there should be some Sign whereby it may appear that God hath committed his Truth to fuch an one: And as it hath appeared possible for God to give Signs of his Power to convince Men of his own Existence, it must be allowed possible likewise for him to give of his Power to such a Man to evidence that God is with him. And again, it is no other than a Reasonable Expectation, B b 4

Y

f

n

d

h

le

of

ne

ed

ly

to

);

of

re

nis

zu,

15:

rebis

/ill

pectation, as well in the Person sent to reveal any Truth of God's to others, that God work on his behalf, or gives him Power to work some Sign, by or upon which he may be believed, and gain himself Credit with Mankind; as in those to whom such Prophet cometh to ask a Sign whereby they may know that God hath fent him. This Moses did in the one Case, Exod. 4. 1. This the Tews did expect in the other Cafe. Fohn 6. 30. And by all that God himself provided, and ordered to be done, in case Pharaoh should speak after this manner to Moses, saying, Shew a Miracle for you, Exod. 7. 9. it's plain by that, and by what is univerfally feen, that the generality of Mankind have the fame Sentiments about this Matter, and would defire and expect that God should on the behalf of his Messengers, shew the same Signs to convince us of their Veracity, as we should defire and expect for conviction and proof of his own Existence; that is to fay, we expect from those that come to us in his Name, that they give us Signs of the Power of God, that we may have some Reason to think, and thereupon believe that God is with them.

I will now propose (Fifthly,) this thing further to be considered, namely, Which is most probable, which is most agreeable to those Notions we have of God and of his Goodness, that he should, or should not, make

t

e

y

Ι.

c

0

is

at

S,

ır

or

e;

at

us

ly

on

ıg

15

to 115

it, ke

make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind? There is on the one fide this that may be thought, viz. That the Invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World, are clearly to be feen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead; fo that God has not lest himself without Witness, but Men if they will feek the Lord, may haply feel after him and find him; as he is not indeed 27. far from any one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our Being. And as touching God's Will concerning us, it may be infifted on, That the Reason and Understanding of Man carrieth with it all Natural Truth necessary for Practice in any fort, engraven upon it felf, and folded up in its own Essence: Man has Truth written in his Heart, his Conscience bears witness of it, and while his Thoughts accuse or else excuse one another, he is a Law unto Rom. 2. himfelf. These Things may perhaps seem 14. to make it unnecessary, that God should, and confequently improbable that he would make any further Revelation of himself, than what is done in Nature. On the other fide, the Divine Goodness being considered more maturely, we cannot but think That always inclined not only to have Compassion of the Ignorance, Infirmity, and Weakness of the Creature, but likewise to have Commiseration of Mankind, even when in-

inconfiderate, negligent and faulty: And consequently, in reference to the State of. Mankind (the generality whereof have little Thought or Consideration, and less Forefight; fome uncapable of any depth of Thought, others involved in and taken with only sensible Objects; the former not capable of fearching out, the other careless of looking back after the Efficient Cause of those Things that are seen and present with us; neither looking forward to foresee the Consequences of their own Actions; ) it may well be thought that God's Goodness should incline him to awaken and quicken the Minds and Thoughts of Men to a Sense, and to the Consideration of his Being, and of those Things which they might in Reafon fee (were they attentive to the Dictates of their own Minds and Understandings) to be the Purpose and Will of the Great Author of their Natures, and the Things wherein their Happiness consisted. And especially confidering that which can in no wife be denied, viz. That the Passions and Inclinations of the Human Nature are fo violent and irregular, as not to be always under the Government of Reason, and that all Flesh hath corrupted its way; and that the Nature of Man is so perverse, that having once done Evil, he rather employs his Reason to find out some Excuses for it, than to fee his Fault, and find how to amend

f.

S

f

h

e

t

0

d

S

t

t

mend it; and that the Custom and Habits of Sin growing strong, make it difficult even for a Man when he does fee and know better Things, not to follow the worse; as well as that these very often create Prejudices in the Mind, that obscure the Light of Reason to so great a degree, that the Understanding cannot see clearly the Reafonableness of Things: In these respects we may well think agreeably to the Notions we have of God's Infinite Goodness, that God should some way or other make known himself and his Providence to Mankind in some sensible manner, and not leave Men to themselves wholly, to collect and gather this knowledge of him: That he should give them Precepts of those Things wherein their Good confisteth, and not leave them wholly to find this out by their own Reason, and sad Experience where their Reason may have failed them: That there should Light and Truth be set before Mens Eyes to direct their way, that within them being but weak and glimmering, and obscured with Prejudice and Passion: That there should some Assurances of the Divine Mercy be given Men, to encourage them to break off a finful Course: That there should be Denunciations of the miserable and mischievous Consequences of Evil and Sin, to deter Men from it, that those who have but little Forefight, might not be left whol-

if

in

出めが

a ore GC wha m G gs c G th A m

in VO

B

W

tl

þ

wholly to themselves to make Observations of those Consequences, lest they fall under irretrievable Evils, before they have confidered to know the Confequences of Good and Evil. Therefore is it reasonable to judge according to what the general Sense of Mankind hath judged as to this Case in all Ages: Who, wheresoever a God has been believed, have generally believed also some Communication between God and Men. This was the Foundation of all those Religious Rites and Ceremonies which every Nation pretended to receive from their Gods. This was the Original of all their Superstitious Arts and Ways of Divination, by which they fought of their Gods Notice of Things to come, what would be the Events and Issues of such and such their Undertakings, and whether they were agreeable or not agreeable to the Mind of the Gods. Wherein appeared the general Sense of Mankind, That supposing there was a God, there must be a Communication between Him and Men, and some Way of holding, fome Method for maintaining this Communication. Which is sufficient to conclude for that which I defire to infer from hence; that is to fay, That supposing there be a God, 'tis reasonable to suppose and believe there should be a Revelation made of himself and his Will to Mankind, over and above what we have in the Works of Nature. T will

I will further (Sixthly, ) require, That if it be reasonable to think this, considering the Condition of the Human Nature, the Ignorance, Weakness, and Pravity thereof rendring it unable to attend, and averse from attending to the Things that must put a Restraint upon sensual Desires, and vicious Inclinations; it must be much more reasonable to think and believe this of God's Goodness, considering the actual state and Circumstances of Mankind, at the Time when these Revelations we have (which are faid to be of God) were made. If we admit the Scripture Account, in a very few Generations the Wickedness of Man was great in the Earth: The whole Earth was corrupt before God, and filled with Violence, Gen. 6. v. 5, and 11. before God brought in the Floud upon the World of the Ungodly: And notwithstanding this Terrible Judgment, no sooner did Men begin to multiply again on the Earth, but Wickedness over-spread it also. The Men of Sodom were wicked, and Sinners before the Lord exceedingly, Gen. 13. 13. their Sin was very grieyous, cap. 18. 20. and therefore God thought fit to destroy their Cities with Fire and Brimstone, making them an Example unto those that after should live ungodly. In the Places where Abraham and his Posterity sojourned, there was little of the fear of God: The Iniquity of the Amorites was now full, when the

r

e

rifil

e i-

y

0

er

ge

111

S

11

the People of Ifrael were to be brought into the Land of Canaan; the Inhabitants thereof had defiled themselves with all Abominations and Uncleanness, that the Land it felf was ready to spew them out; i.e. their Wickedness was unsufferable, and no longer to be endured. The Devil, that Tempter which first seduced Man to Wickedness, had got to be familiar with Mankind, and affifted them in their Ways of Divination, was an Agent in their Sorceries and Enchant-These were the Circumstances of Mankind at the time of the first Revelation by Moses, according to the Scripture Account, which no one can well go about to deny; for that from the eldest Prophane Histories, and the most Ancient Pagan Writers it appears that Mankind in general had corrupted their Way, knew to little of God, that they worshipped a multiplicity of Gods, any thing in a manner for God, with Barbarous Rites, and Gross Superstition, and were strangely addicted to Enchantments, Sorceries, Divinations, and Abominable Practices, with Evil Damons, with Spirits and Powers invisible. This Ignorance, Blindness and Corruption grew upon the Gentill World more and more; who according to what is told of them in Scripture, Seeing that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, were by the just Judgment of God left to themselves, and so became vain in their Ima-

t

ŀ

1

F

a

(

Rom. 1.

Imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, insomuch that they changed the Glory of God into an Image made like to Corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beafts, and Creeping Things : Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, to vile Affections, to a Reprobate Mind, to do things the most inconvenient and unbecoming the Human Nature, being filled with all Unrighteousness, &c. And in these Dark Times of Paganism, the Devil and Evil Spirits had every where their Temples, and Altars, and Priefts, and Sacrifices, themselves frequently appearing to their Votaries in Visible Shapes, instituting their Abominable Rites of Worship, and giving forth Oracles and Responses, and encouraging the wicked Arts of Divination and Sorcery. As these Things are intimated and referred to in the Scriptures we have, so they are every where spoken of in There might be the Heathen Writers. some Cheats and Impostures in these Things, but a great deal was real Fact, wherein the Priests did not impose upon the People, but Evil Spirits deluded both Priests and People, and brought the World to have an Opinion of their Divinity. This must be confessed, unless we will question the Credit of all History: In this Degenerate and Wretched State of Mankind (which Reason and Philosophy were experienced too weak to remedy, that prevailing little

1,

f-

of

n

Ċ-

to

ne

ri-

ad

d,

İs,

ar-

nd

ets,

ra-

ind

nd-

till

to

ing

bim

God

beit maor nothing to the Reformation of Mens Manners, and less against their Superstitions and Idolatrous Practices; which when the Wifest of the Philosophers, Socrates himself, began but to speak against, he was put to death as an Atheist and Contemner of the Gods) it is not to be thought that God should leave himself always without any further Witness than that of the Light of Nature, but rather that he should give Mankind fome fenfible Evidences of his own Being, and Prefence, and Power, and likewise more perfect Instructions in his own Nature and Will, and that he should moreover give some Demonstrations of his Power being superior to all those wicked Spirits that had deluded and deceived Mankind into an Opinion of their Divinity, and pretended to come down to them as Gods, and to supply them with those Things, and in those Cases which they should have sought to the True God for, and applied to him in; and wherein, and wherewith indeed he only could effectually and infallibly help them.

I will now further assume (Seventhly,)
That supposing God to intend a Revelation, to preserve or restore his own Glory and Worship, and to save the Souls of Men, in redeeming them from their vain Conversation, and delivering them from the Evil of the World, and from the Power of Satan;

this

d

y

S

d

d

S

d

n

e

ď

y

14

d

n

this must either be done by the immediate Spirit of Prophecy, that is to fay, by fome strong and immediate Impression and Influence of his Divine Spirit upon Mens Minds; or if this be not made upon every Soul, (as it may not be God's Pleasure, or may not be very likely, confidering the difference of Mens Natural Capacities, which may not be alike capable of judging of fuch Impressions, ) then will Men that have not this Inspiration themselves, expect some Sign from those that come in the Name of God, and would be believed to be his Prophets: And in this Cafe, Miracles, that is to fay, Acts and Works of Wonder and Power, that may give some Evidence of God's Prefence with him that comes as a Prophet in his Name, must be allowed and admitted as a Reasonable Evidence of the Prophet's Veracity. For we know where God is, there is Truth; fo that if there be reason to think that God is with fuch a Man, it is a good and reafonable Prefumption, that Truth is with him, and that he cannot deceive. And further, as the greater part of Mankind was under a Delution, and being abused by certain Powers giving themselves out to be Gods, was deceived to take them for, and to worship them as Gods, and drawn into this Idolatrous Practice and Worship by the Apparitions of these Spirits, by their Ora-Ce

cles, Responses, and Predictions of Things future, by the Helps they found in their Arts of Divination and Sorceries from thefe: and by fundry other Acts of Power and Wonder, which these wanton Spirits either wrought, or pretended to work and shew: In this Case, what might be reasonably expected of the True God, is, that he should give Demonstrations of his Power being above all these. And this in Reason mult be allowed to be a fufficient Distinction, whereby to know a Prophet of the Lord's from False Prophets and Magicians, namely, his being able to shew himself assisted by the Superior, Unlimited Power, either in the Greatness of his Works, or in putting a Stop to the Power of the other. must be admitted as a Reasonable and Sufficient Proof, because we can assign no other way for the True God in fuch Circumstances to give a Revelation of himself to the World: And this indeed must necessarily be admitted in Reason, according to the common Sense of Mankind. For we find, as it has been well observed by a Learned Dilock's Ser- vine, out of Cicero de Natura Deorum, from the Folly the Argument of Balbus the Stoick, "That of Deisin. " the Reason of Mankind hath resolved the "Firmness and Stability of our Persuasion "of the Truth of God's Existence, into

"those visible Signs which their Gods gave "of their own Power and Prefence, Quid

ec pra-

Dr. Sher-

r

d

r

(-

d

It.

n,

s

ed

in

ng

iis

ıf-

er

ın-

he

be

m-

it

Di-

mc

nat

the

ion

nto

ave

wood

ræ-

" præsentiam suam sæpe Divi declarant: The "Argument is good and Rational. The same "Philosopher, he observes, thought, that "the Being of God (being supposed) must "necessarily infer Divination, as Divination "did prove the Being of a God: Ego fic " existimo, si sint ea genera Divinationis vera " quæ accepimus, quæq; colimus esse Deos, vi-" cissing; se Dei sunt, esse qui divinent." If this be Reason, then according to the Principles of Reason, Miracles and Signs of a Divine Power are not to be rejected, the Revelation which they are offered in proof for, by reason that several Powers pretend to work them; but Search, Examination and Trial are to be made, Evidences looked after, which of these are of God, which True Signs of his Power, which shall oblige us to receive the Prophet that cometh in his Name. It is not to be supposed, that a Man finding himself here in some Uncertainty, must presently reject that of which he was before in Reason certain; that is to fay, having concluded of God's Existence, because he hath seen Effects of a Divine Power; and likewise having reafonably concluded from the Supposition that there is a God, that his Help may be found, and there is some way for a Communication to be had with him; he is not to let go this Certainty, because he finds several Powers (it may be) offering and pre-Cc 2 tending

tending to give him help in Cases where he may want it; or pretending feverally to do Works of Wonder and Power, to beget an Opinion of their Divinity. He indeed cannot let it go upon this, but must admit their Works to be a Proof of the Existence of fuch Powers; he may, 'tis likely, be apt to think that they are Gods alike, but cannot take upon him to fay or think, that there are no fuch Powers, when he fees fenfible Effects of their Power. But inafmuch as his Reason doth not easily admit, that there should be more Gods than One, he must not rest satisfied in this neither, to think them Gods alike, if there be any posfible way of finding out which is the True God. And inasmuch as that Satisfaction he hath received in this Case, is chiefly from the Signs and Tokens of the Power and Prefence of fome Divinity, he cannot but defire to see some Demonstration given of a Power Superior to the rest, in Signs and Works of this kind, either in the greatness of one's Works above the other, or in the one's controlling of the other, and doing Things beyond the Power of the other's. This is what a Man in Reason would desire to see, and from feeing a Competition and Contest in a Case of this nature, would conclude that Power which should prove it felf superior, unlimited in its own Acts, and able to controul all Competitors, to be the Power of the

0

2

b

N

0

ir

N

ar

ec

tu

fo

R

m

ju

to

ac

Po

Re

t

.

h

E

le

0

1e

on Hv

nd'

ut

of nd

of ie's

ngs

s is

telt ude

pe-

e to

the

the only True God, who is infinite in Power and Might. I take it to be in one refpect a very Natural Thought and Speech of the Men of Lystra, who when they saw the Miracle which Paul had wrought in healing the Cripple, cry'd out, The Gods Acts 14. are come down to us in the likeness of Men: Their calling Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, was according to the Superstition they had liv'd and been brought up in; but that the Gods were come amongst them, or at least that Men affisted by the Gods were come unto them, was rational and natural for them to think as Men. I judge that also to be no other than reasonable, which was admitted by the Fews, (and which they did not refuse even in the midst of their Idolatries) for a decifive Proof in the Controversie which the Prophet Elijah had with them for their forfaking the Worship of the True God: They could not answer the Prophet a Word, when he argu- 1 Kings ed with them, faying, How long halt ye be- 18. 20. tween two Opinions? If the Lord be God, then follow him; if Baal, then follow him: Their Reason would not admit the Thought of more Gods than one; neither could they judge it otherwise than reasonable, to come to some Resolution in the Case, which to acknowledge, and then to stick to that Power which they should have found most Reason to acknowledge to be God: And Cc 3 theretherefore when the Prophet made a further Proposal, saying, Let the Prophets of Baal erect an Altar, and prepare their Sacrifice, but put no Fire under, and I who am the Lord's Prophet will do the like; and the God that an-(wereth by Fire, let him be God; they could not do otherwise but answer immediately, and fay \_\_\_\_ It is well spoken. I do think I may from these Instances infer what Inference the Reason of Mankind must make upon seeing Signs of an Invisible Power, and also what Evidence the same must admit as a Reasonable Evidence to distinguish between such Powers, and resolve which is the True God; which may with Right challenge and claim, and to which they may with most Reason give their Homage and Worship.

(Eighthly) There is yet another Assumption that I would make, or which at least I shall offer to be considered, and which I persuade my self will appear reasonable when considered: It is this, ——That whatever Signs may be wrought by Inserior Powers, they neither shall in Reason weaken our Faith in the True God, nor lessen our Belief of his Omnipotent and Insinite Power, nor be granted sufficient to seduce a Rational Creature from his Dependance on the one True God, nor from his Service and Worship, after this that Men have once seen Demonstrations of the Insinite Power of

the

the Supreme God, and have had Conviction in a Competition between his Prophets. and those that have pretended to be affisted by other Powers against him (and who have been known to have been affifted by fuch Powers to the doing of Wonderful Works, when they acted of themselves, and appeared not in competition against the Prophets of the Lord), that the Power of the God of Heaven is beyond all those other Powers able to controul in any Instance as well as to go beyond, in every Thing which they may, or possibly can do. This must be allowed me necessarily as to Signs which fuch Powers might have shewn before the Competition, and also as to all Endeavours or Works of this kind appearing great at the beginning, but rendred vain and weak, or controuled and check'd before the end of such Competition: Otherwise, supposing that there be a God, and supposing also that there be Evil Spirits, and supposing further that these Evil Spirits may have shewn Signs to deceive and delude Mankind (which Thing in Fact is not to be denied, unless we will deny the Credit of all History, which consequently makes it absurd for any Man to go about to deny either of these Suppositions), if this Assumption be not granted as to Signs wrought before, and even in such a Competition by these deluding Spirits, that these shall be all as nothing Cc 4

e

ıt

y

nłI

I

ole

lat

or

ik-

len

ite

e a

on

nce

· of

the

te

21

tl

to

0

k

W

n

n

le

b

di

h

W

I

ir

thing, after once the True God has given us Demonstration that his Power is superior to theirs; I cannot fee what way can be affigned as possible for God to undeceive the World by any Evidence that he can give of his Power: Therefore the Reason of Mankind necessarily admitteth, that the Works of fuch Powers shall signifie nothing, when the Power of God hath shewn it self above them: And for the same Reason, that the Signs wrought before and in sucha Competition by those Deceiving Powers, shall go for nothing, after Demonstration once given of the Supreme Power of Almighty God: doubtless whatever Signs such Powers may work afterwards, and at another time, ought to be of no more fignificancy with us, either to prove their Divinity, or to seduce from our Dependance on, and Worship of the Omnipotent God: Forasmuch as a Rational Creature cannot think that to be a Divine Power which he hath feen limited and controuled, inferior, and forced to yield to another. There is but one Difficulty that can any thing perplex in such a Case as this, namely, if the Signs which these Iuvisible Powers may give of their Presence and Divinity, or as a Testimony to any Prophets, should be to all appearance the same, and so far above the reach and apprehension of the Human Understanding, that the one as well as the other might be taken

taken by it for the Power of God; which is a Case that nothing can decide but a Competition; which Competition likewise is not to be seen at our Pleasure, but must be left to the Pleasure and Will of the God of Heaven, whether we shall see or be shewn any fuch or not: In these Circumstances there will be difficulty how to know the Lord's Prophets to whom we must hearken, from False Prophets, to whom we are not to give ear: But if in this Case a Rule be given by a Prophet of the Lord's, of whose Power and Truth there remains no manner of Question at all with us, but that we know the Lord hath spoken to him, and that what he hath spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, is Truth; this, I should think, might take off that Difficulty; for Reason must admit that Regard is to be had to that Rule, which the Prophet that is acknowledged to be of God may have given us to help out our Weakness, or to prevent Seducers from getting advantage upon us thereby; and likewise that such a Rule may be depended on, because we are sure of the Prophet from whom we have it, we know him to be a Prophet of the Lord's, beside whom there is no other God.

E

e

1-

d

d

y

se se

ce

ıy

10

p-

g,

n

There is fomething further still which I shall require to be admitted, as depending upon good grounds in Reason; which is this, — That supposing Inspiration, and

n

2

p

c

1

the Witness of Miracles to confirm the Word of the Prophet, the Inspiration may reveal to fuch Prophet, and the Prophet alfo work a Miracle to confirm that Revealed Truth, which may have fo much Reafonableness in it self, as that by Moral Arguments it might be sufficient to beget a belief in the Minds of Sober and Good Men; which being a Thing reasonable, might have been judged to have been thought of by Man, and gathered in and from the Reafon of his own Mind, and which confequently would not have been thought a Prophetical Revelation, but for the Signs which the Prophet should give of his having it from God: But which, nevertheless, being delivered by the Prophet as an Inspiration of God, and confirmed with Signs of a Divine Power, is to be looked upon and accounted as a Revelation, and as a Divine Truth, such as God thought fit to give notice of anew, over and above that Notice which the Notions of Truth implanted in the Human Nature may have given us thereof. And the one of these Evidences shall not be supposed to destroy the other, but it rather shall be imputed to the Goodness of God, that he has given Mankind a Revelation of Reasonable Truth, not leaving them wholly to themselves to find what is reasonable, but shewing them what is so, and convincing them by the Word in the Mouth le

0

a-

1-

e-

n;

It

of

**a**-

e-

1

ns

1g

e-

1-

2

C-

ne

0-

ce

in

us

es

er,

d-

a

22-

lat

(o,

he

th

Mouth of his Prophets, that fuch and fuch Things are the Will of him our good and great Creator, which our own Reason cannot but assent unto, as most reasonable and fit for the great and good God to require, and for Man, as a Rational Creature, to practife and observe; for this Reason especially, that it cannot be otherwise judged by us, but that the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind consisteth in the Things which God the Creator willeth us to obferve and practice: The Reasonableness of the Truth shall not by any means be drawn into consequence, to make the Revelation thought unnecessary, because this is to be supposed designed to help out and affift the Weakness of Human Nature: And the Truth of the Revelation, though sufficiently confirmed by the Evidences and Signs of God's Presence and Power with his Prophet, shall nevertheless receive a further and additional Confirmation from the Reafon and Understanding in the Mind of Man, which must reasonably believe and assent to the Truth revealed as a Truth worthy of God, and most likely to be his Will concerning Man, whom he hath made a Rational Creature, and endued with a Capacity of judging and apprehending the difference of Good and Evil, and thereby of knowing in some measure, and approving the Things that are honourable and becoming his Nature, ture, that are virtuous and praise-wor-

M

In

be

va

W

W

四山

W

ca

Sa WW

thy.

These Things being premised, which are not presumed without good Reason, I do not doubt but essectually to prove and make out the Truth of Revealed Religion, and particularly that the Christian Religion standeth upon the most just and unexceptionable Proof, having unquestionable Evidence for its being the Truth of God: The Evidence it carries with it being such, that it stands in need of only so much Probity in Man's Mind, as to be willing to do the Will of God when he shall come to know it, to make way for that Conviction which it gives concerning the Doctrine of Christ, that it is of God.

The Case and Circumstances of the Scrip-

ture-Revelation are these, viz.

Man was created by God a Rational Creature, and was by him made upright, tho he hath fince fought out many Inventions: When thus created, he was not left to himfelf to feek after God, but God was pleafed to appear and converse with him; (this cannot be thought incredible, for if we believe that God made Man, we must believe that he made him holy, and that he endued him with his Rational Faculties: And again, in his State of Holiness, it is not incredible that God should shew him his Glory, and make him fully and perfectly acquainted with

r-

e

I

ld

n,

on

1-

1-

ne

at

ty

he

it,

it

ft,

p-

2-10'

s:

n-

ed

ın-

ve lat

im

in ole

nd

ed th with his Will, which he might do by Revelation, as well as by Impressions on his Mind): But nevertheless Man fell from his Innocence, and the generality of Mankind being depraved in their Reason, became vain in their Imaginations, and walked not with God, but fell to Superstition and the Worship of Idols that were no Gods, and grew familiar with Dæmons, Invifible Powers, that pretended to affift them as Gods, but were indeed no other than Devils: (This cannot be gainfaid as a thing incredible, for that the Corruption of Mankind, and their Superstition and wicked Arts of Divination, are as old as Story.) In these Circumstanres, in this Milerable and Degenerate State of Mankard, when the Ever-living God hould think fit to take out of the World a People for his Name, it would be expected hat he should give the most sensible Demonstrations of his Power, and shew the ame superior to all those Powers which the World dealt with as Divine, but which were indeed Devils, and not God. Less than this would not be expected; and more than this could not in Reason be desired.

Now this is that which we shall find done by God, when he assayed to go and take him Deut. 4 Nation from the midst of other Nations, by 34-Signs, and by Wonders, by a mighty Hand, and by a stretched-out Arm, and by greatTerfors, according to all that the Lord God

did

C

I

t

2

n

b

H

fe

П

V

1

eı

C

D

N

al

V

G

fu

Po Tin

M

Ri

W

to

lik

feen

Ver. 35.

did for Israel in Ægypt, before the Eyes of that People, and in the fight of the Nations round about. Unto this People was it shew. ed, that they might know that the Lord he is God, and that there is none else beside him: And in the fight of the Nations was it shew. ed, that they might hear the Fame of the Lord among his People, and that it might be known there was none like unto the God of Israel in all the Earth. And for this Cause (as the Scripture hath told us) God raised up Pharaoh, to shew in him his Power, and that the Name of God might be declared in all the Earth: That by this King, who was a Person haughty, refractory and obstinate, by his exalting himself against the Power of God, which wrought for the deliverance of his People; by his proud Question, Who is the Lord, that ! should obey him? and resolute Obstinacy in faying, I know not the Lord, neither will ! let Israel go; there might be occasion for God to shew and exercise his Power in the greatest Acts of Wonder and Might, and to multiply his Signs and Wonders in the fight of his People, and of the Egyptians, by which the Fame thereof must the more increase and spread. And as Pharaoh was harden'd in Obstinacy to the last degree, and set not his heart to consider and take notice of the Miracles of Moses, even though himself had called for a Sign of him, and

Exod. 9. v. 15, 16. f

5

7-

le

nt

of se

ed

nd

all

2

te,

W-

he

his

t I

in

11

for

the

and

the

ans,

ore

Was

ree,

take

ugh

*Seen* 

feen it wrought, but fought for the Magicians to oppose and withstand the Power of God in his Servant, and to work with their Enchantments; herein was there an opportunity for it to be shewn, that the Devil and his Agents with their Enchantments might do great Things; and yet for it to be seen nevertheless, that the Power of God was above them. And for this Cause it feemeth as though the Magicians were permitted to do in like manner as Moses, in feveral Instances, with their Enchantments, to thew that Moses the Servant of God was engaged with those that had the Affistance of Powers invisible, ( that is to fay, those Damons that had deluded and deceived Mankind, by Pretences of Power and Acts above all the Power of Man, or it may be above the Power of Nature, ) and that nevertheless it should be seen the Hand of God with Moses was beyond them, by the fudden Stop which God would put to that Power of theirs which had done great Things, and by his working on with Mofes in Signs and Wonders, fo as to bring the Magicians themselves to acknowledge the Finger of God; and this Proud King, that was more wicked and obstinate than they, to humble and fubmit to his Almighty Hand, and to know, That there was none like the Lord God in all the Earth. When Ifrael had thus the Opportunity of feeing and the

the great Works which the Lord did among the Agyptians, as well as the last great Miraculous Work whereby they were drowned in the Red Sea, when as this People had a Way made for them to pass through, it was but reasonable that should follow which the Scripture hath told us, namely, That the People feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his Servant Moses, Exod. 14.31. And likewise the Inference which Fethrothe Priest of Midian, Moses Father-in-Law made, when he heard and was informed of all that God had done by Moses for Israel his People, and that the Lord had brought Ifrael out of Ægypt, was Rational and necessary, and what every Rational Confiderate Man must make, that shall hear thereof, even this, -Now know I that the Lord is greater than all Gods; for in the things wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them. In this whole

V. II.

Exod. 18.

V. I.

Now when the Power of God was thus shewn to the World, and especially to his People Israel, in the Competition between Moses and the Magicians, and in the further great Acts of Power shewn on their behalf, that they might know that the Lord he is God, and that there is none else besides him, which

Transaction, as the Power of God evident-

ly appeared, fo the Superiority of his Pow-

er above all other Power, was also therein

manifested beyond all Doubt or Contro-

f

01

ri

pi

th

te. Gr

C

to

oth

ve)

cr

t

10

1

e

at

of

ld

ft

S,

an

ilt

le

It-

W-

in

0-

us

nis

en

er

ılf.

15

m,

ich

which gave them full opportunity of confidering, that no other Power in Heaven or in Earth could do according to his Works, and according to his Might; and therein an undeniable Evidence, that the Lord he is God in Heaven above, and in the Earth is God in Heaven above, and in the Earth beneath there is none elfe. This being fufficient to oblige this People, that they might fear the Lord their God for ever, and likewife for all the People of the Earth, herein Josh.4.24. to know the hand of the Lord, that it was mighty. The Law is after this given to this People, confisting in Statutes and Judgments fo righteous, that no Nation had the like: That all the Nations which heard of these Statutes, must say of the People. having and keeping this Divine Law, -Surely this great Nation is a wife and underflanding People: For what Nation is there forgreat, who hath God fo nigh unto them, or that hath Statutes and Judgments fo righteous, as the Law fet before this Peoplease Dear. 2.8. And the Thing which the Lord now required of this People, after having thewn them his Glory and his Greatness, was, That they fear the Lord their God, and ferve him, and diligently keep his Commandments, and Tellimonies, and Statotes; and that they Mould not go after other Gods, of the Gods of the People which vere round about them, nor learn to do afer the Abonithations of Those Nations, who heark-Dd

hearken'd unto Observers of Times, and Diviners, and consulted with familiar Spirits, and gave themselves to the Use of Charms and Enchantments, and did unto their Gods every Abomination which the Lord hateth. And more particularly, if there should arife among them a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and he should give them a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto them, faying, Let us go after other Gods (which they had not known ) and let us ferve them; they should not hearken unto the Words of that Prophet, but put him to Death, (because he spake to turn them away from the Lord their God, to thrust them out of the Way which the Lord their God had commanded them to walk in, ) whofoever he were that should entice them to go and serve other Gods, ( i. e. of the Gods of the People which were round about them, nigh unto them, or far off from them, from the one End of the Earth unto the other End of the Earth, that is to fay, any God or Gods of any other Nation whatfoever), Deut. 13. v. 1, and 7. A Precept furely not unreasonable, when the Lord God had done so great Things, to make this People know bim, and know that there was none like him, nor any God beside him; and to establish them for a People to himself, according to all that they had heard and

-Plyson

and feen: This People having feen likewife the Abominations of the Nations, their Idols, Deut. 29. wood and stone, fiber and gold, which were a- 16. mong them; having likewise seen the Power of the Lord their God in the Land of Ægypt, and in his bringing them from thence; and that upon the Gods of Ægypt the Lord executed judgment, shewing himself and his Power above them, superior to all those invisible Powers that opposed him. For even allowing that a false Prophet might shew Signs and Wonders, it could hot be a sufficient Reason for this People to go after other Gods, who had feen and known that there were other Powers that fet themselves up for Gods, and that wrought Signs and Wonders, but were indeed no Gods, could do nothing when the Lord their God would shew himself above them, by a Restraint of their Power. Which therefore they had reason to account, notwithstanding their Signs of Power; to be no other than what their Lawgiver had intimated them to be; that is to fay, Devils, and not God, Deut. 32. 178 After this, it pleased God still to do Wonders amongst this People, to the end that they might know, that the Living God was among them. And joth j. to. yet this People, whom the Lord had redeemed to himself from the Nations and their Gods, (though the Lord alone had led them, and there was no strange God with him Ddz

ls h.

er gn er

n, ch

he

a-

eir )

he

a-o

ay,

at-

ord

ake ere

ide to

ard

a

r

a

n

T

fo ar

tl

ar Po

by hi

ve

Ea re

Ro

ce

phets'

in any of those Works of Wonder and Pow. er which he wrought for them, from their Deliverance out of Ægypt, to their being

15.

fettled in the Land of Canaan; ) were fo foolish and unwise as to forsake God, and lightly efteem the Rock of their Salvation; (according to that which Moses foretold,) to provoke him to jealoufy with strange Gods, and with the Abominations used in the Worship of Devils: and still it pleased God to testify against them, by his Spirit in the Prophets, though they dealt proudly, and hardened their Necks, and were unmindful of the Wonders that he had done among them. Sometimes their Iniquities constrained him to deliver them into the hand of their Enemies, that he might expostulate with them on the account of their going after Gods whom they knew not; to new Gods, that came newly up, whom their Fathers feared not, faying, Where are their Gods, their Rock in whom they trusted? but when he faw their Power was gone, and these must have found that there was none to rife up and help them, and be their Protection; then would he lift up his hand

to Heaven, and exert his Power on their

behalf in Revenges upon the Enemy; that

God, and there was no other with him, to

kill, and to make alive, to wound and heal. At other times, by the hands of his Pro-

his People might fee that he, even he was

177

phets would he give them such Demonstrations of his Power, in Signs and wonderful Operations, as might shew it to be above all Gods, and even constrain them to acknowledge that the Lord he is the God, and make them therein ashamed of the Idols they had chosen; as in the Contest that Elijah had with the Prophets of Baal. In all which it appears, supposing Truth in the Matters of Fact which are received from the most unexceptionable and certain Tradition, (the Jews that lived in the time of those Facts, delivering them down to their Posterity, and that whole Nation in all Ages receiving and acknowledging those Books for genuine, wherein those Acts are recorded; which makes it the Tradition of a whole Nation, and confequently most worthy of belief; ) that the One True God so clearly revealed himself to the World, and to the Jews more particularly, that there could be no doubt of his Existence; and likewise proved the Superiority of his Power above all others. And again; that by the fame means by which God render'd his own Existence unquestionable, and proved himself to be the God of Heaven and Earth, and that there was none else; he render'd the Truth of the Prophecy and Revelation of Moses indubitable and unexceptionable; whence the Jews were obliged o believe in God, and to believe his Servant Dd 3 Moses:

-

e

e

(-

ir

0

n

re

e,

as

ir id

ir

at

as

to al.

0-

ts

Mofes: The same Things must oblige them to have no other God but him, and not to hearken to any Prophet, though working Signs that should perswade them to go after other Gods whom they knew not, after new Gods, whom their Fathers feared not. And this must put it beyond question also with the World, supposing it to have Conviction of the Facts; that as for Mofes, to be fure the Lord spake unto him; and as for the Lord the God of Israel, he must be greater than all Gods, there being none that can do like him.

And now as to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Doctrine; the God of Heaven did not only (in the Works of Christ) give an undoubted Testimony of his Existence, by fuch Operations as Men must necessarily look upon to be the Signs of a Divine Power; but also shew his Power to be above that of Devils; and as therein and thereby also he hath conformed to the Divine Misfion of Jesus Christ, the World must be obliged to receive, and believe, and hear-ken to his Gospel. The Jews could have no just Reason to refuse, but on the contrary, had sufficient Evidence to believe, and all reasonable Grounds to acknowledge him for their Messiah. Their Lawgiver Moses (of whom they fay, we are fure the Lord spake

Deut. 18. unto him ) wrote of him, faying, That the Lord their God would raise them up a Prophet 1

r

w

ld

h

n

re

rd

an

ke

nd

ot

unby

rily

W-

Sove

eby Mif-

be

ear-

nave itra-

and

him

(0)

(pake it the

ophel

lik

like unto himfelf; and unto him they should hearken in all things: Now there was not a Prophet in Ifrael like unto Moses, (whom Deut. 34. the Lord knew face to face') among all the succeeding Prophets of Israel, until Jesus Christ; doing like him in the Signs and the Wonders which the Lord fent him to do, and which he shewed in the fight of Israel. Yea, all their Prophets, as it were with one Mouth, spake of the Times of the Messiah; spake more or less of the Things that were fulfilled in him, and fell out in his Time. The great Works which they expected to be wrought by their Messiah, upon the Prediction of their Prophets, were wrought by Jesus Christ; insomuch that the Tews fay, and reason among themselves, When Christ cometh, will be do more Works. than this man hath done? And Fesus resolves the Question of John the Baptist's Disciples, Whether he were the Christ, or not? by bidding them tell their Master what they heard and faw; viz. the Blind receive their fight, the Deaf hear, the Lame walk, and to the Poor the Gospel is preached; that is to fay, he did those very Works which the Messias was to do according to the Predictions of him; which he must therefore be supposed to have the Power of God to do, and therefore also must be believed to be the Messiah, from his doing them. The Jews had indeed a Rule, not to receive a Pro-Dd4

7

P

h

S

7

3

W

b

7

tl

in

R

C

0

in th

u

th

th

Cy

w th

> on W

> Po

for

nis

Prophet that should invite them to Idolatry , or feek to turn them away from the God who brought them out of the Land of Ægypt; though that Prophet should shew Signs. But this, Jesus was so far from doing, or any thing like it, that he owns the Law of Moses was from God; himself ob. ferves that Laws and declares that he came not to-destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them: He always pressed the Worship of the God of Hrael, and of him only. He appeals to Mofes and his Law, and to the Interpretation thereof given by their own Prophets, to shew the Conformity of his Doctrine to the Divine Will: Whatever Mofes commanded, as to the Love, and Fear, and Spiritual Worship of God, the Gospel of Christ requires the same from greater Motives and Considerations, than were before understood: In Kindness to our Neighbour, and Acts of Beneficence, the Gospel does far exceed the Law of Moses. As to the Ritual Observations of that Law, their own Prophets (before Christ) had given them to understand, that those were not the weighty Matters, nor the principal in God's Intention; that they were Typical of Things to come, and defigned to be subservient to those that were the principal; and were to give way to them, according to the Intention of God, who would have Mercy rather than Sacrifice. To

£

7

3

0

t

4

d

r

f

r

el

er

eb-

el

oir

en

ot

al

oe ci-

C-

10

ce.

To which Spiritual Sense of their Law discovered in the Interpretations their own Prophets put upon it, Christ appeals when he insists upon, and seeks to introduce a greater Righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharifees, pressing the weightier matters of the Law, the Spiritual Worship of God, the loving him with all the Heart, &c. and our Neighbour as our selves; on which two Commandments, as he fays, hang all the Law and the Prophets, as the Fews themselves must own, that this is more than all Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices. in this respect therefore the Jews had no Reason to question the Power by which Christ wrought his Miracles, (he being an Observer of Moses's Law, and acknowledging Moses for a True Prophet, and pursuing the Ends of his Law, which was the ground upon which themselves acknowledged all their other Prophets which have spoken to them, and believe their Power and Prophecy to be of and from the same God that was with Moses) so on another account likewise they had reason to look upon the Objection of the Pharifees against him and his Works, as though they were done by the Power of the Devil, to be unjust and false; orasmuch as they saw it consuted by Christ's Appeal to the nature and kind of his Works, which appeared to be wrought n opposition to Satan's Power, by his casting,

G

ir

b I I S P

e

1

1

ing out Devils, wherein also his Power ap. peared superior to that of the Devil; this also being evident, that his Doctrine tended altogether to the Overthrow and Destruction of the Works of the Devil, of that King. dom which he had fet up among Men in opposition to the Worship of the True God and his Righteousness; as this introduced and pressed the Worship of the one True God in Spirit and in Truth, and perfuaded all Men to feek his Kingdom and Rightel oulness. That difference which there is between the Law and Gospel, that New Doctrine which the latter teacheth, could not be a reasonable Ground for their reject. ing Christ and his Truth. For his Miracles that he wrought, coming to them in the Name of the God of Ifrael, must oblige them to acknowledge him as a Prophet; at the least, the Predictions of their own Prophets must oblige them to this, as this is a Rule with them, that the Prophet of whom another Prophet hath testified, is to be prefumed a Prophet, and needs not to be examined. Hereupon the Works which Christ did, according to the Predictions of their Prophets concerning him, must testify him to be the Prophet, who they looked should come: And besides, their Prophets had foretold that God would make a New Covenant with his People, and themselves own that Great Prophet whom they expected,

p.

ris

ed

ti-

g-

In

od

ed

ue

led

te-

is

ew

uld

ct.

les

the

ige

at

ro-

is a

of

s to

be

ich s of

efti-

ok-

hets

New lves

ect-

ed,

ed, was to instruct them more perfectly in God's Will: The Woman of Samaria's Saying was no other than the general Expectation, \_\_ I know, when that Messias cometh, be will tell us all Things: Consequently the Instructions which he gave (being only the interpreting their Law to a Spiritual Sense, which their own acknowledged Prophets had before in fome measure attempted) could not be a just ground of Offence, but was rather a Truth which upon the Testimony of so many Miracles they might well have received, were indeed obliged to receive upon that Evidence: For as the Miracles could not be denied, and as the Power which wrought them (by the Nature and Kind of the Works, as well as by the Predictions that were made of the coming of fuch a Prophet, and of his doing fuch Works) appeared to be the Finger of God; the Argument of our Saviour Jesus Christ must needs stand good against them, viz. That if he by the Spirit of God cast out Devils, and did his other mighty Works, then of a furety the Kingdom of God was come Thus are the Miracles of Christ unto them. a Conviction to the Jews beyond all just Exception, of the Truth and Divinity of his Gospel, there being no just ground to deny, but on the contrary, all Reason to admit them to be wrought by the Spirit and Power of God.

And

Etri

tha

wh

Sup

tis

bef

the

to

and

and

cei

vin

or

Sei

be

ic

C

no

nc

no

ng

p

ho

Spi

ni

r

he

0

he n

e

Acts 14.

And it being now the Will of God to take also from among the Gentiles a People for his Name; it was the Divine Pleasure, that in the Name of Christ, Miracles and Wonders should be wrought among these. Thus at Iconium the Lord gave Testimony unto the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by the hands of Paul and Barnabas, Acts 15. 12. And at Lystra a wonderful Cure is wrought by St. Paul up. on a Man that was a Cripple from his Mother's Womb; which the People accounted fo fure a Testimony of the Power and Prefence of God, that they cried, The Gods were come down to them in the likeness of Men, and ran with the Priest of Jupiter to do Sacrifice; upon which the Apostles blaming their Error and Superstition, preach unto them, that they should turn from their Vanities unto the Living God, Alls 14.8. In presence of the Roman Deputy, Sergius Paulus at Paphos in Cyprus, these Apostles had a Contest with a Sorcerer and False Prophet, who withstood them, seeking to turn away the Deputy from the Faith: Him Paul sharply rebukes, as being full of Subtilty and Mischief, a Child of the Devil, and an Enemy of all Righteousness, and strikes him with Blindness by the Hand of the Lord, that he immediately was forced to feek fome one to lead him; which when the Deputy faw, he believed, 'tis faid, being aftonished at the Do-Etrine

Acts 13.

ce

is

in

rs

at

10

ıd

ul

ra p-

oed

e-

re

nd i-

ir

n, es

ce

at

n-

10

he ly

J-

iy th

10

0

1e

10

FA

drine of the Lord, at the Power of God, that is to fay, accompanying this Doctrine, which in this Instance appeared absolutely superior to the Power of the Devil, which tis most probable that Sorcerer had shewn before the Deputy, to turn him away from he Faith, and that this occasioned St. Paul o give him the Name of one full of Subtilty and Fraud, for his cunning fraudulent Works and Sorcery. Again at Philippi, when a certain Damsel possest with a Spirit of Divination followed Paul and his Companions or feveral days, crying, These Men are the Servants of the most high God, which shew us he way of Salvation; (a most cunning Artiice of the Devil, that his Agents might be ccounted to be like thele, by this Testinony pretended in favour of those that were ndeed the Servants of the most high God, nd shewed his Way in Truth); St. Paul beng grieved thereat, commands that Evil pirit, in the Name of Jesus Christ, that he hould come out of her, and the Unclean pirit leaves her forthwith: Which (tho'it nraged her Masters to whom she had rought much Gain by her Soothfaying, that hefe, feeing the hope of their Gains was one, accused them to the Magistracy, and hese caused them to be scourged and put Prison, as Troublers of their City, and eachers of a Religion contrary to their aws) was nevertheless an Instance of the Power

and C

the N Foras

Devi

Powe

them

was a

God.

the l

many studie

broug Black

cing

to do

gued

State

amor

whic

persu

the V

be no

whic

ana 1

nifice

those

fence

Men

and

Acts 19.

Power of the True God above the Devil, and of the Knowledge his Servants had to dif-cern the Fraud and Artifice of that Evil Spirit: And this Miracle, very probably, had fome share with the Earthquake in the Con. version of the Gablet, Alls 16. 18. And again in Afia God wrought Special Miratles by the hands of Paul, so that from his Body were brought unto the Sick Handkerchief and Aprons, and the Diseases departed from them, and Evil Spirits went out of them! The Sick and the possessed with Devils were immediately cured: In which, as the Power of God appeared, so it appeared superior to that of the Devil, and by being opposite thereto, appeared to be indeed the Power of God. Where likewise a most remarkable Thing happened in the Attempt of certain Vagabond Jews, who went about pretending to cure Diseases, and cast but Devils: These had a mind to try to cast them out by the Name of Jesus, and took upon them to call over them which had Evil Spirits, his Name, faying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth; but the Evil Spirit would not obey them, knowing them not to have any of the Authority from Christ which Paul had, and made the Man which was possess'd to fall violently upon them, that they went out of the House naked and wounded. This Accident being known, wrought much upon both the Jews arid

Acts 19.

and Greeks, so that Fear fell on them, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified : Forasmuch as from this it appeared that the Devils could not be cast out but by the Power of God; and as they were cast out by them that preached the Gospel of Christ, it was an Evidence that these were indeed of God, were affifted by a Power above that of the Devil, and contrary thereunto. this had an Effect accordingly, for upon it many of those that used Curious Arts, that had studied and practifed Magick and Sorcery, brought and publickly burnt the Books of their Black Art, in Testimony of their renouncing the fame, that they would have no more to do with the Devil, nor the wicked Arts of Divination. Now what was chiefly argued by Sr. Paul from those Acts and Infrances of Divine Power which he shewed among the Gentiles, may be observed in that which Demetrius lays to his charge, that he persuaded and turned away much People from the Worship of their Gods, faying, That they be no Gods which are made with hands; by which the Temple of the great Goddess Diana was like to be despised, and her Magnificence destroy'd: And 'tis certain that those Works of Power were such as in their Nature must give a Conviction of the Presence of the Omnipotent God with those Men that persuaded the World to the Belief and Worthip of him, and was the most effeetual

fectual way of convincing them late that the Gods which the Gentile World worship ped were not Gods, as being made with Hands, and that the Powers which shewed themselves among them in their Idols, were Devils, and not Gods: And that the Gentile World might have a full and lafting Conviction, as well of the Being and Power of the Omnipotent God, as of the Superiority of his Power, above all others that fet them felves up as Gods, and were by them wains ly reputed and worshipped as such; it was the Divine Pleafure, according to Christ's Prediction, Mark 16. 17. that Signs should them that believed 5 that these should in the Name of Christ, heal the Sick cast out Devils, &c. Which Power of Mira cles continued in the Church for Ages for the Conviction of the unbelieving World 39 who! might therein see God bearing Witness to his Truth with Signs and Miracles, &c. and also that the Power of the True God was above the Power of all those which by them were accounted Gods; this appearing as well in the casting out Devils, as in the healing of all Sicknesses and Diseases. For the Truth of which, Tertullian in his time appeals even to the Heathers themselves; hence perfuading them, wi Dromaxer, not to fight against God, as they did in their Perfecution of the Christians. That Father from this Topick well argues against the

Tertul.
Apolog.
adverfus
gentes.

leutest

Gen-

Genti

but

" Po

" the

"be

fo co

flians

conte

put th

" put

" fail

" rits

"on,

" to

as the

the la

have

tween

cular

eases

the C

posses

at t

"Ch

tha

tho

rits

anc

OW

we

to

elfe

Gentiles, That their Gods were no Gods, but Devils only, "feeing Christians had "Power to cast them out, and to compel "them to confess and own themselves to "be Damons, and not the True God. And so confidently he afferts the Power of Chri-Mans over these Unclean Spirits, that he is content, if the Heathen Persecutors would put their Case upon this Issue, "they should. "put to Death that Christian who should "fail in the Attempt of forcing these Spi-"rits, and compelling them to a Subjecti-"on, and to this Confession of themselves "to be Devils and not God." And whereas the Gentiles pretended to distinguish at the last, when they faw the Christians to have fuch Power of casting out Devils, between those Damons which possessed particular Persons, and afflicted them with Diseases, or which spake in those that were the Common Diviners; and them that were possessed by their Gods in their Temples, and at their Altars: Tertullian "makes the "Challenge as to these, as well as the other, "that a Christian should force and compel those that were possessed with these Spirits, which they owned to be their Gods, and that did Cures by their Power, to own themselves to be what they truly were, Devils; this they should be forced to do in the presence of a Christian, tho elsewhere, and among their own superstitious E e

"tious Worshippers, they falsly gave them-" felves out to be God." Upon which, as a Thing certainly known and true in Fact, he thus farther argues, and overthrows therein the Divinity of the Heathen Gods; faying, "If these Gods of yours are in-"deed Gods, why will they own them-" selves to be Damons? Is it done in obe-"dience to us? Then that which is your "Divinity is subject to a Christian's Power, " and therefore may not be thought to " have any Divinity: Besides, their yield-"ing to us who oppose their Power and "Divinity, must be to their own shame, " and to the Confusion of their Worship-" pers. If on the other hand they confess "themselves Devils, or at least subordinate "Spirits, why do they elsewhere and in o-"ther places give out themselves for God? "Surely as those which are accounted a-" mongst you for Gods, would not say of "themselves that they were not so, if they "truly were Gods, because that would be "to destroy and to divest themselves of "their own Majesty; so those which you "know to be Damons, would not give "themselves out to be Gods, if there were "at all any fuch Gods as them whose "Names they use and take upon them; " for they would fear in such Case the abu-" fing of the Majesty of those that are su-" perior to them, of which they must ne-" ceffarily

" be

" the

" fe " G " al

" an

"he" b

" n

" T " w " C

" n" cc

lian' but

upo

ged the give " ceffarily be afraid. That therefore can " be no Divinity which ye hold and account " fuch; for if it were, it would not be af-"feeted by those Damons which confess "themselves not to be it, nor would they "deny themselves if they were Gods. See-"ing therefore either way this forced Con-"fession of theirs shews them not to be "God, you may understand that they are "all of one kind, that is to fay, Evil Da-"mons or Devils. And therefore as you " are either way to feek for God, (for those "whom you prefumed to be fo, you fee "herein to be only Damons, especially as "by that Confession which a Christian will "force from them, they shall tell you that " neither themselves, nor any other that "you so account, are Gods, ) by this you may apprehend incontinently who is the "True God; whether it be not He, and "whether it be not only He, whom we "Christians profess; and whether He be "not to be believed and worshipped, ac-"cording to the Faith and Discipline of "Christians." This Argument of Tertullian's I have not fet down for any thing, but the Strength of the Reason in it, which confutes the Heathen Idolatry, and shews us upon what account chiefly they were obliged to turn from those Vanities, to serve the Living God: Namely, for that God, had given the World an undoubted Evidence of his Ee 2

his Existence, and withal no less an undoubted Evidence of the Superiority of his Power above all the Gods that the Gentile World vainly worshipped; whence they could not but see sufficient Reason not to be led nor deceived any longer by the false Pretences to a Divine Power, which the Devil or Devils had made among them, giving themselves out as Gods, and by Signs and Wonders seducing the Ignorant to esseem them as such.

And thus I take the Evidence given by Miracles to Revealed Religion, and to the Christian Religion in particular, to be indubitable and unexceptionable. In that (First,) it appeareth beyond all question, by the Power of God with Moses, that there was an Evidence given to the World, as of God's Existence, so of the Superiority of his Power; and by the same means also the Truth of Moses's Revelation must be put beyond Exception. And though it does not appear that this Evidence prevailed on the Heathen World any further, than that the Nations round about became afraid of the God of Israel, still continuing to apply themselves to their own Gods, and vainly feeking Help from those which could not help; yet this is plain, that these Evidences which God gave of his Power and Prefence, and of the Superiority of his Power above the Gods of the Nations, were the Grounds

wro in ( ed t 2 5 Peo Lor wro beh time mig a R Wo ness this the befo con all

Gro

Ten wou of h of t ple,

then

Solo

for he ) from

This

Grounds of Conviction to the Jews, that wrought and prevailed on them to believe in God and his Servant Moses, that redeemed them from the Nations and their Gods, 2 Sam. 7. 23. and confirmed them to be a People unto the Lord for ever: As he the Lord upon this became their God, and wrought on still with his Power on their behalt, and fent his Prophets from time to time to fpeak unto them. Which thing might have been, and was at the same time a Reasonable Conviction to the rest of the World: but their Blindness and Wickedness render'd it inessectual. I insist upon this, from the Instance we have in Jethro the Priest of Midian, (of whom I spake before) and the Ground upon which he concluded, that the Lord was greater than all Gods, Exod. 18. 9, and 11. for that wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them: and from a remarkable Passage in Solomon's Prayer at the Dedication of his Temple, when he had prayed that God would there vouchfafe to hear the Prayers of his own People Israel, and moreover also of the Stranger that was not of that People, but should come from a far Country for his Name's fake ; For they (fays he) shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm. This would be the Motive, he supposes, of their coming from far Countries, to the Ee 3 TemTemple of God at Hierusalem. And, as it was in his Opinion thought that this would be a Motive, and would bring Strangers to worship the God of Israel; so it must, and will ever be acknowledged, by all that are fensible of the great Name of the God of Israel, and of his mighty hand, and stretchedout arm, to be a Reasonable Motive for all Men to feek and address themselves to this the ever-living God. This was a Reasonable Ground for all People of the earth, who should know his Name, to fear him as did

his People Ifrael.

And again, (2dly.) The Christian Revelation more especially hath an undoubted Confirmation from the Miracles wrought in Attestation of its Truth, by the Power and Spirit of God with Christ Fesus, and by those Acts of Wonder and Power done in his Name by his Apostles and Followers. Him the Jews were obliged to receive as a Prophet, and to believe for his Works fake; for that he came to them in the Name of the God of Israel, and their own Revelation testifyed of him, and of the Power of God with him, to the doing of fuch Works, whereof themselves were Eye-Witnesses. It was this that made divers of 'em say, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the World, John 6. 14. Their own Revelation foretold God's sending them such a Prophet, to instruct and

to

teaci

no s

his

and Spin

ack

mea

ny

ing

Kin

fite

rior

in e

tol

Cir

to 1

his

Pou

and

his

mo

gav

Wo

Ch

gav

tha

the

mi

the

Co

ver

teach

teach them all things; and they could upon no account justly refuse Jesus Christ; because his Doctrine tended to the fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, and the introducing a Spiritual Righteousness, which their own acknowledged Prophets before had in fome measure hinted and aimed at. The Calumny which the Pharifees cast upon him, being refuted likewise from the Nature and Kind of his Works, which appeared oppofite to the Devil's Works, as well as fuperior to his Power. Their own Scriptures in every thing giving witness to his Person, to his Works and to his Doctrine, to the Circumstances of his Life and Death, and to the Manner and End thereof, and to his Refurrection that followed, and to the Pouring out of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, and to the Calling of the Gentiles, (to whom his Name was also preached.) As the Testimony of Moses and the Prophets, therefore, gave a Confirmation to Jesus, and to his Works and Doctrine; fo the Works of Christ, and the Power of God in him, gave a witness again to the first Revelation, that it was of God, who now fent his Son to bless his People, in turning every one of them from their Iniquities; to fulfil the Promise that he had made unto their Forefathers, and in Remembrance of his Holy Covenant with them; That they being delivered out of the hands of their Enemies, Ee 4 (that (that is to fay, their Spiritual Enemies, Sin and Satan) might ferve him without fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before him all the days of their life. Him, again, the Gentiles have all Reason gladly to receive, and on that account to glorify God, who hath visited the Nations, to take out of them a People also for his Name: Who when he fuffered the Nations to walk in their own ways, left not himself without witness among them; by which they might have fought and found the Lord God: But as they did not, he hath been pleased to make himself to be found of those that fought him not, and to give Evidence to the Gentiles of his Power and Presence, granting them likewife Repentance unto Life. This might well make the Gentiles gladly to receive that Truth for their Salvation, which the exceeding and unfearchable Goodness of God was pleased to grant them, and to confirm the same to them in fuch a manner, that there could be no doubt but that it was of God; who shewed his Existence and Power to them, in the Miracles and Wonders which were done among them; and also shewed his Power to be Superior and above all those Powers which they before had been deceived and deluded to take for Gods, and to worlhip with abominable Superstition. This could not but be a reasonable and sufficient Evidence,

deno thof God Forc fame End of 1 tion Mer part in tl and of efter ans, Jew. to t cern lievi less ditio er d ers : fent belie to t are

> buil A vela

whi

dit ;

dence, that they ought then to turn from those Vanities, and to serve the Living God, who made Heaven and Earth. The Force and Strength of this Argument is the fame even now, and will be to the World's End; supposing the Truth of the Matters of Fact, which come to us by an unexceptionable Tradition, by the Writings of Men that were Eye-Witnesses to the most part of them; which Writings were foon in the hands of many Nations and People, and have been acknowledged the Writings of those whose Names they bear, and esteemed as True Records by all Christians, in all Ages. The Testimony both of Jews and Heathens also, (unconcerned as to the Truth of the Facts, or rather concerned not to have them true, as not believing upon them , ) confirming nevertheless in a great measure the Christian Tradition as to the Works of Wonder and Power done by Jesus Christ, and by his Followers in his Name. As we have also the Asfent of all Fews and Gentiles that have believed in the Name of Christ before us, to the Sufficiency of those Matters, which are the great Motives of Credibility, upon which the Truth of our Holy Religion is built.

And thus it appears, that the Divine Revelation we have, is most worthy of Credit, as it standeth upon the Evidence and Wit-

Witness that God hath given to it, by the undoubted Signs of his Power and Prefence, and by the Proof given of the Superiority of his Power above all that have been called Gods. Yet will its Authority be still further confirmed in our Minds, when we find Right Reason directing us to those Things, which Revelation hath informed us to be the Will of God concerning us: When both these are found agreeing, who can with-hold his Faith from them, but he that would be accounted not only to have little Religion, but wholly destitute of Reafon? That Reason it self, which acknowledges the Things as righteous and good, worthy of God, and most becoming us, must allow them to be the most probable Subject of a Revelation. Whereby the Testimony of such a Revelation, must in Reason have the easier Admittance, and the greater Credit with us. Nevertheless, I do not think that a Revelation is to be believed without its proper Testimonies, barely for that its Subject is such as Reason might judge proper and worthy of a Divine Revelation: Nor that Human Reason, on the other hand, may so far depend upon it self, as to reject the Evidences of a Revelation, if in their kind good and fufficient, upon this account, that the Subject of it is not understood to be agreeable to the Notions of a Man's own Mind, or may be thought disagreeable to Prin-

Vicio Not 1 in M Capa Trut their ces-n prop as th of a ing t Not take Aron take affir Rev upo Rev fifte

Mai

beli

and

tion

nies

bee

Princ

nave;

and o

ces f

tions

Principles which a Man may heretofore have thought rational: For all Mankind must allow that the Reason of Man is weak, and of a short view, and may have Prejudices from Education, Custom, and the Pasfions of Human Nature, as well as from Vicious Habits, and Perverse Inclinations Not to mention the great difference that is in Mens Knowledge, and in their Natural Capacity of knowing and enquiring after Truth; and the further difference which their own Will, or Temper, or Circumstances may make in their use or neglect of the proper means of Knowledge: Which things, as they are Arguments for the needfulness of a Revelation, and in that respect for its being thought probable to be according to the Notions we have of God's Goodness, so I take them to be Arguments likewise that strongly conclude that a Man should not take upon himself from his own Reason to affirm, that this or that Thing cannot be a Revelation from God (though coming to us upon the unexceptionable Testimonies of a Revelation) because it seems to him not confiftent with his Reason; for then every Man must be allowed and left to himself to believe as much, or as little as he thinks fit and proper in his own Mind, of any Revelation whatever (though built upon Testimonies never so unexceptionable); and it had been in vain for God's Prophets to say, as we ever-PECULL

ever find them, The Lord saith thus or thus, until they had first shewn Men, that Reason saith thus and thus. But their way of speaking was with a Decisive and Infallible Authority, and twere to be wished all spake thereof accordingly, as declaring unto Men the Testimony of God, whereby the Truth would have his Authority, which would give it a Force and Essicacy beyond the Excellency of Speech and of Wisdom.

This now being the Evidence that Miracles have given to Revealed Religion, and to Christianity in particular, I take it to be a Proof that depends upon so much Truth and solid Reason as will surmount all the Objections and Cavils of the Unbelieving

WorldBullono

For (First) if it shall be pretended that Miracles are not a certain Proof of God's Existence, but that the Visible Works of the Creation are a greater. It shall be anfwered, that the Vifible Works of the Creation are indeed a sufficient Proof thereof; and if all men had used, and would use their Reason aright, there might have been no need of any other: But inasmuch as the greater part of men, left with this Witness, have not, however, found out God, and most of those that have thence acknowledged him, have been careless, however, as to the finding out his Will concerning us, and negligent of practifing even what they could

could nust other and so is W be ma is give there but in and P

And here eason end. work That would racles he co ome : Mind Beings ind w lea's, its w uced ecess:

nd Po Miracleafor

pirits vill, could not but know to be his Will; hence must there be confessed a necessity for some other Proof to be made of God's Existence, and some Revelation likewise to be made of his Will: And no other or better Proof can be made or given of the one, than that which is given in God's Miraclous Works, nor is there any Certainty to be had of the other, but in and by these Signs of God's Power and Presence.

And (Secondly) if it be objected, That here is not a Certainty in this Proof, by eason that several and different Powers preend, and perhaps have been known to work them. It shall be answered, First, That this does no way infer what some would pretend; that is to fay, that all Miacles are Illusion and Imposture, but rather he contrary, that these Effects must have ome real, though latent Cause: And as the Mind of Man conceives but two forts of Beings, that is to fay, Spirits and Bodies, nd we can reason but according to our Ilea's, we must consequently ascribe to Spiits what we cannot apprehend can be prouced by Bodies; and thus Miracles will ecessarily prove the Existence of Spirits ad Powers Invisible. Whether indeed the Miracle be the Work of God, there being leason to think that there may be other pirits and Powers invisible besides him, vill, it must be confessed, be still a Que-

fion that will remain to be refolved. But then (Secondly) though feveral and diffe. rent Powers may have wrought Signs of this kind, yet as the God of Heaven hath shewn us his Power, and afcertain'd his Revelation by making his Power appear above and beyond all other Powers pretending to Works of Wonder, in his controuling, ftop. ping, and acting beyond the others at his pleasure: Hereby we may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none elfe, as among the Gods there is none that can do as he doth: And herein will there be always a good and fufficient Reason for the Supreme God to be feared, and his Revelation to be acknowledged and received, as herein it may be known that he whose Name alone is Jehovah, is the most high over all the Earth; he is great, and doth wondrous Things, he is therefore God alone: This will be a perpetual Reason for all the Nations whom he hath made, to come and worship before him, and glorifie his Name; For that among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any Works like unto thy Works, Pfalm 86. v. 8, 9.

If (Thirdly) it be objected, that the Revelation of Moses having its own Authority from Miracles, begs the Question for it self, when it requires that a Prophet, though shewing a Sign or a Wonder, that is to say,

even

even

ened

Grang

that

that

Proc

elfe.

feque

Peop

there

othe

this

wrou fore

that

had

Pret for (

to a

feen

God

Pow

ther Wor

feem

Han

foun

of fi

only

even working Miracles, should not be hearkened to, if he persuaded to the worship of frange Gods, Deut. 13. 1. We are to answer, that this is no way begging the Question; for that this Revelation required not their Belief that the Lord was the only God, but upon Proof first given, that he is God, and none elfe. It says indeed in effect, that the Subfequent Actions or Signs of other Powers ought not to delude, neither should God's People fuffer themselves to be deluded thereby to acknowledge or to worship any other Gods: But why this? It is not upon this account only, that the True God had wrought Miracles among them, and therefore they should give no Credit to others that might work them; but because they had feen in Fact that other Powers did by Pretences of this nature fet up themselves for God, and that Vain Men had entred into a Familiarity with those Powers, which were only Devils, and not God; but had feen nevertheless that the Power of their God was above them, that his Omnipotent Power could controul and overcome the other at his Pleasure. Hence, whatever Works might be wrought by other Powers feemingly great, they might be certain the Hand of God was not therein, if they were found to intend the feducing to the Worship of strange Gods; for they might be fure the only True God would not give away his Glory

Glory to another, would not act in contradiction to himself; and they need not to fear any other Gods, whatsoever their Works might be, as knowing their Power was nothing in competition with the Power of the

ord was t

God of Ifrael.

So that (Fourthly) if the same Objection should be made against the Christian Revelation, that it begs the Question for it self, when it forbids the hearkening to False Christs, and False Prophets, and yet supposes their shewing Signs, and doing Works of Wonder. The fame Answer will take it off, that is to fay, that it prefumeth nothing as concerning Jesus's being the Christ, but upon Proof given thereof by his Miracles, upon Evidence also that these were wrought by the Power and Spirit of God, upon concurrent and unquestionable Testimonies likewise from the precedent Revelation: And after this Evidence it may well require that we admit not of another Gospel, nor of any other Doctrine different from the Truth as it is in Jesus, though False Christs, or False Prophets should shew Signs and Wonders: acting according to the Power of Satan: For as that Enemy of God and of Mankind, and of all Righteousness has always withstood God's Truth, and fought to seduce Mankind, fo will he still make his utmost Efforts to advance his own Kingdom and Works. But we are not now ignorant of his Devices,

ved of I ving he d of c ftill perr Pov not it's Sato is k Chr And be o of S

Dev

abo

con

purp

ftroy

deft

let Man not.

ven

feth

God

Reu by a

Devices, nor of the Power of God's being above him, nor of Christ's being able to controul and overcome him, who for this purpose was made manifest, that he might deftroy the Works of the Devil; who hath indeed destroy'd the Kingdom of Satan, and proved his Power to be above all the Powers of Devils, by his casting out Satan, and driving him from Persons and Places wherein he once had Rule and Power: It is a Truth of our Faith, nevertheless, that God hath still left some Power to Devils, and that he permits them on some occasions to act with Power; but this, how great foever, shall not seduce a Confirmed Christian, because it's known to be the working of the Power of Satan; whose Power though great in it felf, is known to be inferior to that of God and Christ, and under the Controul of theirs. And for our knowing whether fuch Works be of the Power of God, or of the working of Satan, the Christian Revelation hath given us a Rule, viz. Every Spirit that confefseth not that Jesus is the Christ, is not of God: And again, If any preach another Gospel; let him be accursed: And again, If any Man bring not this Doctrine, receive him not.

If (Fifthly) it be an Objection, That the Revelation of Moses is believed and stuck to by the Jews, as established upon Miracles, and that these receive not the Christian Re-

Ff

velation,

velation, pretending to Miracles alike, not even though this maketh a fair pretence to greater and more than were wrought by Mofes; we have an Answer, That there is in truth no Opposition between the Christian Revelation and that of Moses; that the Jews have no just Exception against either the Miracles of our Saviour, or his Doctrine; that their Suggestion of his doing them by the Power of the Devil, was confuted by the Inconsistency therein, and likewise by the Testimony which their own Prophets gave of God's fending a Prophet among them, with his Power to do the Things which Jesus did, and for the purpose for which he wrought them, to confirm the Truth of the Gospel which he should preach unto the Poor: That the Gospel of Christ cast no Contempt upon the Law of Moses, but rather confirmed its being of God, and that it designed not the destroying, but the fulfilling thereof, and the introducing that Spiritual Righteousness which their own Prophets had hinted to be the thing chiefly aimed at by God, and the most acceptable in his fight, to be more than all the Rituals of his External Worship, even more than all Burniofferings and Sacrifices: So that as Christianity will stand good against the Jews, if this be its Case, and if these Things be made out concerning it; fo no one else shall have this to urge against either the Truth of the

Re

tha

otl

of

Ol

op

tio

the

me

the

the

po

ma

the

Me

jul

Pr

and

ma

the

tai

to

wh

Sc

wh

CO

Qu

rig

for

Mo

the

pe

Revelation of Moses, or that of Christ; that the one of these are opposite to the other, and yet both lay claim to the proof of Miracles: For the Supposition in this Objection is false, the one of these is not opposite to the other, neither is the Revelation of Moles opposite to the Christian, nor the Christian opposite to that, but the former gives Testimony unto the latter, and the latter supports and builds its self upon the former: Therefore the present Jews opposing the Christian Revelation, cannot be made an Argument against its Truth, tho' their Pretence for this be the Revelation of Moses, this Pretence of theirs being no ways just, even the Law of Moses, and their own Prophets testifying of the Kingdom of God, and of the New Covenant which he would make with his People, which must suppose the ceasing of the old: And this is also certain, that divers Jews have admitted Jesus to be their Messiah, and believed his Word, who were chiefly they which fearched the Scriptures whether those Things were so, which were alledged out of their Scriptures concerning Jesus being the Christ: And the Question is, which of these were in the right; which must be first determined, before the Mira-cles wrought on behalf of Moses's Revelation can be objected against the Truth of the Christian: And if it appear, as it furely will, that the Law of Mo-Ff 2

fes and the Prophets have been rightly expounded in the Things which concern the Lord Fesus Christ, the Miracles of Moses fall in together with those wrought by Christ himself, to confirm the Truth of his Gofpel. And thus, on the other hand, the Christians opposing of the Jews, can never be drawn into confequence, to prove an Opposition between the one Revelation and the other: for these will tell you, that they oppose only the Prejudices and the Passions, and the unreasonable Incredulity of the Jews, that have not admitted the Revelation of Jesus Christ, though testified by, and consistent with their own Law and Prophets; they do not deny the Revelation of Moses to be of God, but on the contrary, infift upon it to have been from him, and appeal to it, as giving the most undeniable Proof that Jesus was the Messiah, in whom have been fulfill'd the Prophecies that were of him that was to come: They appeal to the Spiritual Sense of the Law, which the Prophets chiefly drove at, and infift that the Gospel hath effectually introduced that Righteousness into the World; what the Law could not do in that it was weak, that the Gospel of Christ hath done in them that walk after the Spirita The Miracles therefore wrought here in the one, or in the other Case, cannot be supposed the Works of different Powers, and confequently not opposite in any respect one

Re ve ye fue

ha

or

th

th

lid on ver ers

tha wh kir the

abo tha gica

Mosthe Go

oth giv

Por Cer in t

And

one to the other, but Operations of one and the same Almighty Power, pursuing the same End of Holiness; that is to say, that Men might be holy, for that the Lord

their God is holy.

If (6thly) it be objected, that the Gentile Religions were opposite both to Moses's Revelation, and likewise to the Christian, and yet these have their pretence to Miracles, fuch as cannot well be disproved: We have to answer, that this Objection is invalid, both as to one and the other Revelation notwithstanding. For as to Moses's Revelation, that owns the Being of other Powers, that feducing Spirits were helping and affifting to Men in the Arts of Divination; that these by making Things succeed which Men wished for, had deceived Mankind into an unlawful Commerce with them; but infifts, that the Power of God is above all the Power of these Damons; and that this was shewn in that which the Magicians of Ægypt did in their withstanding Moses, and in the Stop which was put to their Power, (which shewed the Hand of God to be with Moses) and in the many other mighty Acts which Mofes wrought to give the Jews Conviction of the unlimited Power of the God of Heaven, and of the Certainty of that Truth which he delivered in the Name of that mighty and Terribbe God. And as this obliged the Jews to have no other

ed 1

Pov

the

shor Mir

that

whe

a Q

fon

mit

way

feek

ever

any

ther

than

as v

kind

ther

this

was

app

God

that abou

hen

know to

mu

tion form

moi

other God but him, so it was a Proof to all the World that should hear the Fame thereof, that the Lord is greater than all Gods, that there was none like unto the God of Israel. Therefore notwithstanding after this the Gods of the Gentiles, which were Devils, and not God, might, as we will allow they did, continue to delude the Heathen World, to use the wicked Arts of Divination and Enchantment, to confult with Familiar Spirits, and to worship some of those Spirits as Gods: This could not shake the Faith of the Few who had feen the Power of God with his People, whom the Lord alone did lead, and there was no strange God with him; who had feen that the Gods of the Nations were no Gods, but the Work of mens hands, Wood and Stone; who had been informed by their Law-giver, that the Powers to which the Nations facrificed were Devils, and not God; who knew that the Lord their God was God alone, and that there is no God with him; that the Gods in which the Nations trusted, were not like their God and Rock, even their Enemies them-Selves being Judges. Nor could this be sufficient ground for the rest of the World to continue in their Worship of those deluding Powers that had deceived Mankind: For supposing indeed Men to have no knowledge of any other Powers invisible than the Omnipotent God, they would be excufable in afcribing Effects that cannot be accountcd

ed for as naturally coming to pass, to the Power of God as their Cause; and as herein they might through Ignorance be deceived, should Evil Powers be permitted to work Miracles among them, fo it must be thought that Ignorance would be their Excuse: But whether this were ever the Case or not, is a Question, there being probably good Reafon to think that the Devil never was permitted to shew much of his Power in this way, before Men used unlawful Means in feeking after it. But be this as it will, however it being once known, or there being any apparent Cause for Men to think that there are more Spirits and Powers invisible than God, and that of these there are bad as well as good (of which perhaps Mankind were never wholly ignorant, the Heathen themselves having some Notions of it) this must make Men concerned to find who was God indeed: And inafmuch as it would appear to any one that heard what the Lord God did in Ægypt, and for his People Ifrael, that the Lord God of Israel is God in Heaven above, and in the Earth beneath, there was hence a way for all People of the Earth to know his Name, and a Reason also for them to fear him as did his People Israel. And much more now fince the Christian Revelation, as this is built and grounded upon the former, and hath given yet a further Demonstration of the Omnipotent Power of Ff 4 the

the God of Israel; who now designing to take from among the Gentiles also a People for his Name, hath shewn unto these his Power, and manifested his Truth by that his Power, convincing them, that they ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone, graven by Art or Man's Device: That they are no Gods which are made with Hands; that the Powers which they took to be Helpers of them, and to come down to them in this or that likeness, were not the Living God who made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all things therein; that therefore they should turn from those Vanities, from their Superstitions and their Idol Deities unto the Living God: That although there were Powers by them call'd Gods, and many of that fort, yet in Truth there is but one God, by whom are all things, and we by him; who made all things, that is, and whose Creatures we are. Conviction was given to the Gentile World, by that Testimony which God gave unto

Acts 14.3. the Word of his Grace, granting Signs and Wonders to be done by the Hands of his Apostles, and by the Miracles and Wonders which God wrought among the Gentiles

by them: That the Residue of Men might Cap. 15. feek after the Lord, and the Gentiles come

12, 6 17 to know his name, even the Name of the Lord God who did all these things. Now

though

tho

mit

of

the

wei

doe

vic

the

of t

the

mu

the

the

the

be

tis

infe

and

dec fore

mo

the

fici

Go

and

Th the

of

ove

COV

tur Pro though after all this the Devil was permitted to do his utmost to the Deceiving of the Gentile World, and might or did do the things among them by which they were before deluded, I do not fee that this does at all abate or take off from the Conviction given the World, of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, and of the Power of the One True God. The Works which their Idol Deities had wrought before, must go for nothing, when it appeard that these were Devils and not God, and that there was a Power above them ( which is the fame thing, for if those pretended to be God and were not, as they were not 'tis most certain, their Power being found inferior, they must be Wicked, and False and Lying Spirits, feducing Dæmons, that had deceived Mankind.) And the Works therefore which these might do afterwards among their Votaries, to retain them in their old Superstitions, could not be a sufficient Reason for Men to think them to be Gods which had been shewn to be inferior and subject to the Power of the True God. The new converted Christians therefore in the Primitive Times, who being disabused of the Follies of Paganism, were watchful over the Practices of the Gentiles, to difcover all impostures in things of this nature, do not flick to own however, "that Prodigies and miraculous Works were wrough

wrought by their Dæmons: ( Justin Martyr, Minucius Felix, and Tertullian have left us what the Sense of the Christians of those times was concerning the Nature and Operations of those Damons which the Gentiles Worshipped.) But they looked upon this as no Objection of any strength against the Truth of Christianity, for that the Power of God appeared above these in every thing, in all Contests which the Christians had with the Heathen Idolaters, with those among them that pretended to Works of Power. Therefore the Gentile Religion cannot possibly maintain it self against the Revelation of Moses, and much less against the Christian Revelation, upon the score of its Miracles; for that the Powers feared by the Gentile World, how great foever, are nothing in comparison to that Power which was the Fear of Israel, or unto that God who in times past suffered the Nations to walk in their own ways, and winked at the times of that ignorance, but now commandeth all Men every where to Repent; having given assurance unto all Men, that He is the God that made the World, that is Lord of Heaven and Earth.

If (7thly.) it be objected, that the Professors of Christianity differ among themselves concerning the Christian Revelation, and are not agreed about its Truths; and that Miracles are pretended even on that

fide

fide

rup

Anf

renc

botl

tain

stan

Pro

are witl

of h

fequ

have

caul

fo it

Spir

mer Wor

tend which

trary

that

preto

Doct and

destr

there

the a

ther

we b

whet

side which to Reason seems to have corrupted the Christian Truth: We have to Answer that this Difference ought not to render the Revelation questionable, because both fides agree in that, and on the Certainty of the Evidence upon which it stands. And the one side's rejecting the Proof of Miracles, as to Doctrines which are no part of, and which are inconfistent with the Truth of Christ, and the Doctrine of his Apostles, cannot be drawn into confequence against the Proofs which Miracles have given to the Revelation it felf; because in that Case, as the Miracles appear'd, fo it appear'd also that the Hand of God was in them, that they were wrought by his Spirit, there being a Testimony from a former Revelation to the Person and to his Works, and to the Doctrine also, which tended to fulfil the Law and the Profits which tellified unto it. Whereas the contrary of this appears in the other case, for that 'tis manifest the Doctrine which these pretend to prove, is another, and a different Doctrine from that of Christ and his Apostles, and fo far inconfistent with, that it's even destructive of the Truth of Christ. Since therefore this Revelation hath forbidden the admitting of another Doctrine, or ano-ther Gospel, and given a Charge, that we believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God, because many false Prophets .

Prophets are gone out into the World; and hath told us that even in the Church of Christ, there have been those who faid they were Apostles and were not, but have been found Liars: Therefore with good rea fonand fufficient ground, those are put upon the proof that their Doctrines are the fame with the Gospel: which they being by us known not to be, we reject the Testimony of their Miracles; for that, if they were not Impostures, as most probably they are, nevertheless we should have reason to conclude that they are of the working of Satan, who acteth with all deceivable. ness of unrighteousness, to seduce from the way of Truth.

If (7thly.) it be objected, That almost all Religions that have been in the World, have pretended to Miracles; and likewife that it has been found amongst (perhaps edge all) Religionists, that there have been Impostures, Things pretended for Miracles, d by which have been found to be Delusion and n An Cheat: And likewise, that there is some ns, Uncertainty as to our Knowledge of what rincip Things are miraculous; some Things, it he Ar may be, having been thought to be fo, al Rel when as really they were not; but only re confirming and unaccountable to them that reported them for Miracles, whereof the ipoter Causes have been discerned by Men of the Causes have been discerne more Judgment: It being likewise possible

or a

ome

nfiri

hem

his a

nay

Men

nay

wn

nay

vhen

he A

heir

hat t

acles

hat v

he R

he fa

re be

uprea

or a Number of ill Men to agree together, ome to pretend Sickness, or Disease, or nfirmity; and another to pretend to Cure hem; and others to give Testimony of his as a Truth to the World, when, it nay be, the Thing is absolutely false; or Men, it may be, ignorant, tho innocent, nay give the Testimony according to their wn Conjecture, when they themselves, it hay be, are imposed on in the Fact, or then there is nothing really Miraculous in he Action, and it's only so thought from heir Mistake and Ignorance. And further, hat there is no Certainty even in real Miacles, the Revelation of Moses supposing hat wicked Powers can work them, and he Revelation of Christ supposing likewise he same: That therefore if any Miracles re believed, it must be those which the upream Powers in every Nation acknowedge, and command to be received: Which Things are put together and argud by our Mr. Hobbs.) We do not want Hobbs's a Answer to every one of these Objecti- Leviathe ns, whatfoever Atheistical or Irreligious rinciples they are defigned to ferve. And he Answer is this,——That in the sevel Religions that pretend to Miracles, we re concerned to enquire, which of these retending Powers is the Power of the Omipotent God? And that will be found by Competitions that have been in the fight

alfo

and

to 1

bee

Na

Wo

upo

an

Te

wh

Me

we

me

tef

the

up

acc

kir

Te

the

ers

Fo

the

the

th

Go

wl

th

G

fhi

in

fight of the World, to be the Power of the God of Israel, which has shewn it self a. bove all others, in Confirmation of the Revelation of Moses, and likewise in Confirmation of the Truth of Christ. And the there have been, it may be, false Pretences to Miracles among the Jews, perhaps, and among some foolish and wicked Christians too, as well as among the Heathens; yet this is no Reason for the Facts that are well testified by Men of Truth and Soberness, to be denied among either the one or the other of these. If such a Reason were good, then all the Testimony of Men whatever must be rejected; because there always have been, now are, and, 'tis likely) ever will be Lyars in the World. And though it be a thing possible, for ill Men to combine and agree together, to amuse others, and raise Reports false and incredible; yet the World is not so imprudent as to suspect Falshood in every Case, or not at least so foolish as to reject the Testimony of Men, whom they have no particular Reason to suspect. The Possibility of Imposture and Fraud, can only argue in Reafon, that Caution is to be used, that we be not imposed on either in Fact, or by Relations liable to any just Suspicion. And the strictest Caution and Examination of this kind, is, what the Miracles that confirm the Divine Revelation, and the Tradition allo also by which they came to us, will bear, and appear from it so much the more credible. The same is to be said in reference to some Mens Ignorance, who may have been themselves imposed on, and whose Narratives might have imposed upon the World, had Things been taken altogether upon trust. This is a good Argument for an Examination and Enquiry whence the Testimony is; Whether the Persons from whom we have it, did use the proper Means to have a right Information, and were in a Capacity of making a right Judgment concerning the Facts which they attest. And the more strictly we examine the Testimony we have of the Miracles upon which the True Revelation depends, according to all Prudent Measures of this kind, the more certain and clear will the Testimony be. And if the Case were otherwise, the Declaration of Supreme Powers could give us nothing of Satisfaction: For as in feveral Countries and Nations there have been worshipped several Gods, the Supreme Powers of the several Nations that have approved the Worship of these Gods, have in effect approved the Miracles which have been given out and reported, that the Greatness and Magnificence of such Gods might be believed, who were fo worshipped. Neither could their Declaration in Reason give any Satisfaction, whether the

the Works of the Setters forth of Strange Worship, or the Works pretended on the be. half of their own Superstition, are True Miracles or False. For these must judge hereof as the rest of Mankind does, that is to fay, by their Senses and Reason of Facts which they fee, and from the Credibility of the Testimony, as to such as come to us by Tradition. Nor can they know any thing more in another respect proper to be confidered in this Case than others; that is to fay, whether the Miracles pretended are the Finger of God, or the Work of Satan. And 'tis most falsly supposed by Mr. Hobbs, that Moses should intend the referring the Judgment of Miracles to the Higher Powers in a Nation, in his Caution to the People concerning False Prophets; that in this it should be intended that no Prophets should be received, nor their Miracles allowed Credit, who should teach another Religion or Worship, than that which the Laws of the Supreme Power in every Countrey should permit. He says indeed, that if any Prophet should speak to them in the Name of other Gods, though he might give them a Sign or a Wonder, and it should come to pass, that Prophet should not be hearken'd to, and that they should not be afraid of him, but put him to Death, Deut! 13. But nothing appears therein, of his referring the Judgment of this Question, Whether

God ther **fup** God this the Ma eve kno Ifra But not racl ers whi is th Mol Apol Wor were Hea for l (he Mira Plag not e that

done

whic

of t

the

ther he spake to them of going after other Gods which they had not known, and serving them, to any Supreme Authority: He rather supposes every Man that knew the Lord God of Israel, a Judge in this Case: Or if this Matter had been to be brought before the Magistrate, it could never argue for the Magistrate's having the like Authority in every Country, but only where it was known and made appear, as it had been in Israel, that the True God was worshipped. But what must plainly prove, that this cannot be a Rule to be regarded, for those Miracles to be good which the Higher Powers shall approve, and those to be rejected which they shall refuse to allow Credit to. is this, That then neither the Miracles of Moses, nor even of our Saviour, nor of his Apostles, could claim admittance in the World. Those of Moses, that Author says, were not acknowledged by Pharaoh, whose Heart was harden'd against them; and as for his letting the People go, he did it not (he fays) upon what he believed of the Miracles, but upon what he Suffer'd by the Plagues. Whether this was fo or not, I shall not examine; this is certain, that the Things that were done by Moses at the first, were done also by the Magicians of Ægypt; and if the Power of Pharaoh could have decided which of these were True Miracles, which of them was the Finger of God, we have the Gg

La

cer

WC

M

the

hir

fel

the

fau

the

Tr

mi

be

it

it

Gr

im

a l

tic

it

thi

it

W

TI

an

ev

ers

G

ty

th

Su

kr

the King's Decision contrary to what the Magicians themselves confessed; for even after these had owned it to be with Moses, Pharaoh's Heart was harden'd, and he heark. en'd not unto them. Thus in our Saviour's Case, the Arguments of him that was born blind, and had by him received his Sight, must have signified nothing when he was convened before the Pharisees, and told by them that he must give the Praise to God, for that they knew the Man that had healed him, to be a Sinner. And what the Pharifees spake against the Miracles of Christ, upon which the common People believed on him ( faying, When Christ cometh, will he do moe Miracles than this Man hath done?) namely, Have any of the Rulers believed on him? but this People which knoweth not the Law, are curfed, Joh. 7.48. must have been a good Argument to set all that Proof aside which his Miracles had given to the World. And thus when the Apostles came among the Gentiles, and were to them as Setters forth of strange Gods, perfuading Men every where to worship God contrary to their National Laws, the Rage and Uproar of the Idolaters against them mult have been justifiable, and they, notwithstanding the Miracles, punishable by the Magistrates, as troubling their City, and teaching Customs which 'twas not lawful for them to receive nor to observe, having Laws Laws for other Worship. And thus the Sorceries of Simon Magus, when Time was, would have deserved more, Credit than the Miracles and Signs which were done by the Apostles, the Roman Powers admitting him to be some Great One, as he gave himfelf out for, but rejecting the Apostles and their Miracles, which Justin Martyr finds fault with, as a Thing most unreasonable in them. 'Tis evident therefore, that the Truth of Revealed Religion never can admit this Hypothesis, nor will its Truth become in the least questionable, for that it cannot admit it; because the Rule is in it felf most absurd, and has not the least Ground or Foundation in Reason; it being impossible that any Authority should make a Fact other than it is in it felf; or a Relation more or less true and credible than in it felf it is; or affign another Caufe to any thing, than that which was the Cause of it; or make, that is to fay, this or that Work to be of God, or not to be of him : The Work will certainly be what it was, and have the same Cause it had, whatsoever the Determination of Supreme Powers may be concerning it. It hath bleafed God to remove for us all the real Difficulty that might have perplexed Mankind in this Case, by making his Power appear Superior to all other Powers; whereby, we know that the Lord He is the God; and then Ggz

by giving in the several Revelations of his Truth, a Rule (which cannot deceive, nor lead us into any Mistake, because it is a Rule we have from God;) for the reject. ing all False Prophets, that should perswade to the Worship of other Gods, though they should shew Signs and Wonders; and again, for the rejecting all that shall preach another Gospel, or bring not the Doctrine of Christ, notwithstanding whatever Miracles they

may have Power to do.

And (lastly,) if it be possible for Men to make that an Objection in earnest against the Truth of Revelation, which is in it felf an Argument to confirm us in a Belief, that fuch Revelation comes from God; that is to fay, the Reasonableness of those Truths which it giveth us as from God; of which, without doubt, any man must have the firmer Perswasion, when Moral Arguments convince him of the Reasonableness of that Truth, which the Revelation present upon the Divine Authority: If any nevertheless shall make this a pretence of Cavil, and fay, that the Light of Reason convinceth of these Truths, and that therefore such Truths might have been found out by its own Principles, from which it even now would acknowledge them, fetting aside all the Authority of Revelation; and that a Revelation therefore was needless; and that the different Pre-

tences

ten

con

fore Pru

his

fwe ble

was of .

Goo fore

tain whi

Fait

owi on ;

Idol Wor

Sup

Men

from

excel

are p Thin

velat

tives

Argu

prev:

ons,

ture,

ther

God'

tences to Revelations different, do rather confound than help our Reason; which therefore may reject them, and confult its own Principles concerning God's Existence, and his Will concerning us: We have an Anfwer that will shew all this to be unreasonable Cavil, namely, that in Experience it was never found that any Men by the Light of Reason discovered these Truths which God's Revelation hath brought to light, before the Discovery made thereby: It is certain also in Fact that the great Reformation which has been made in the World in Mens Faith, and Worship, and Manners also, is owing to the Jewish and Christian Revelation; 'twas this that put a stop to the Absurd Idolatries and Superstitions of the Gentile World, and restored the Worship of the One Supream God; it was this that brought Men by the Fear of the Lord to depart from Evil, to approve the Things that are excellent, to follow after what soever Things are pure, what soever Things are just, what soever Things are honourable and praise-worthy: 'TisRevelation that even now giveth stronger Motives to perfuade unto thefe Things, than all the Arguments of Reason, which are of little prevalency against the Prejudices and Passions, and Unruly Affections of Man's Nature, if the other might be set aside: Neither are there any Arguments of Reason for God's Existence, and Mens being under Gg 3 an Doubelay

an Obligation to walk according to the Light of Nature, and for a real difference between Good and Evil, but what Men of Atheistical Principles may oppose and object against with much more pretence, and colour, and shew at least of Reason, than they do, or can oppose and object with against the Certainty of a Divine Revelation. This is also certain, that all Men have not Faculties nor Capacities alike, nor Opportunities for the fearthing after and finding Truth, nor for the finding and understanding their Obligations in that respect ? Therefore it must be acknowledged an Act of Goodness in God to give us a Revelation with clear and certain Notices of his Will, even tho' that could not be faid which upon account of the Weakness and Ignorance of Mankind, and their deprayed State and Condition, must be said, namely, that there was an absolute necessity for it: And if Man had been left to his Reason only, supposing the Existence of Subordinate Spirits as well as the Being of the one True God (which as it must be supposed would have been the same, whether a Divine Revelation had ever been or not, and their Operations also 'tis to be supposed would have been the same; for neither can it be thought that those Beings were created with respect to us, nor that the Powers were given them for fuch Operations, in reference only to the Divine Revelation

thei been acci now us i hav Opi had vine have delu of ( us w of h acco with of I to be ackn God rece Tha Hear knov

there

make

Trut velat

our

whic

hath

vela

velation which hath told us of them and their Works); in this Case there would have been the same Phanomena in the World to be accounted for by Human Reason only, which now we have a Divine Revelation to affift us in; and the same Perplexity would there have been about Truth, from the different Opinions and Religions of the GentileWorld, had there been no Revelation indeed Divine: Satan, it must be supposed, would have used the same Devices to deceive and delude Mankind, had there been no Truth of God's Revealed from Heaven, to shew us who this Deceiver is, and give us notice of his Devices. And therefore as upon this account a Revelation from the True God, with fufficient Evidence and Demonstration of his Superiority of Power, must be said to be absolutely necessary, so it ought to be acknowledged as the greatest Instance of God's Goodness and Love to Mankind, and received it will furely be with the utmost Thankfulness, by all that are disposed in Heart to feek God, and have a defire to the knowledge of his Ways: For in this Cafe there can be nothing more abfurd, than to make this an Objection against God and his Truth, that the Pretences to different Revelations, perplex our Reason in resolving our selves of Truth: For the Revelation which hath best proved it self to be of God, hath indeed cleared us of all Perplexity, ha-Gg4 ving

th

m

ty

h

to

ai

T

u

E

01

12

R

t

i

a

b

r

ving given our Understandings a clear Light, much brighter than the glimmering Light of our own Reason, and dispersed the Clouds and Mists arising from our Prejudices and Passions, and having likewise discovered to us the Delusions of Satan, a Deceiving Power, of which, as Man by his Reason alone has no notice, fo neither does his Reason pretend to give or direct a Way to And further, inafmuch as with refpect to the Condition and State of the World (the Human Nature being depraved, and the Light of Reason obscured, if not extinguished with Corrupt Opinions, and Evil Practices, with Extreme Follies and Prejudices) it cannot be thought that our Reason ever would have found those Truths, which being shewn us, it does now approve; nor indeed that it would even now fee or approve them, but for the Light that is come into the World, which hath caused us to open our Eyes, so that now we see the Wondrous Things of the Divine Law: Upon this account it can be no other than unreasonable Cavil to urge this as an Objection against the Necessity, and consequently against the Truth of Revelation; which would be a Blessing to Mankind, if there had been no absolute necessity for it, that they might not be left altogether to themfelves to feek out God, and find what his Will is concerning them, but be informed thereof thereof with certainty from himself; much more, as there was and is an absolute necessity for this, as the generality of Men would have been otherwise utterly at a loss, as well to find and know the True God, as to find and be fatisfied of his Will concerning them. The former of which hath been now shewn us beyond all doubt or controversy, in the Evidence that God hath given of the Superiority of his Power above all other; as the latter is likewise plainly set before us in the Revelation that cometh to us, attested by the Works of that Power which hath made it felf appear Omnipotent, unlimited, and above all others. And therefore as the Truths of this Revelation are moreover approved by our own Reason, as most worthy of the righteous and good God to command, and most fit and becoming Man as a Rational Creature to practife; and as the Things of God's Service must be acknowledged such as tend to the Perfection and Happiness of Mankind, which will still give more Reafon for them to be thought the Laws of our great and good Creator, I cannot fee but this should more and more confirm our Belief, and give us all assurance, if any were before wanting, that fuch a Revelation comes from God; that the Truth thereof is his Truth, and the Law thereof is undoubtedly the Will of God concerning us.

And as this is in every Respect and Particular the Case of the Christian Revelation, I think it to be abundantly evident, that Men are not called upon to believe Revealed Religion, without very reasonable and sufficient Proof that the God of Heaven hath given us all the Proofs of the Truth and Divine Authority of the Christian Revelation, that the Nature of the Thing can require, or that were reasonable either for God to give, or Men to expect.

the Morks of that Power which light, made it is the appear Conseposant, unlimited, and above all therefore in the Fritchs

of this Revolution are moreover approved

by Bur own Reafon, as made worthy of the

restateous and good food or a rand, and

to Elemental the most rest one of their

-100 white the control of the bridge of the control of

ing har because the stant of the reconstruction and

Alband and hop sugar best constituents.

Satério and a transfit will be a dose album

yes quienson bost to IIIV orb s

to spinit the safety at this qui sans

ve rival brown a contract the griver a

POST-

nd a seria e lecio a

Bo

thi

tic

ter

Qu

ons

cles

den

tak ver

ed

Por Ev

Do

to

Ma

ly supposed to bud this station faying with

## cretore a night Diffinction of a Mu POSTSCRIPT.

are equally and alike cane : his

cone as if the things

WUSt as I had finish'd these Restections, Mr. Clark's there came another Book to my Hands, Discourse of the Ewhich has something in it relating to vidences of the Hypothesis of this Essay concerning Natural Miracles (though without mention of the and Re-Book, or its Author : ) And I cannot but Religion. think my felf obliged to take some notice of what is in it relating to this Mat-

This Author proposing to consider the Pag. 350. Que stions, and Disputes, and different Opinions concerning the Power of working Miracles, and concerning the Extent of the Evidence which thefe give to any Doctrine, takes notice that it has been much controverted, whether True Miracles can be worked by any less Power than the Immediate Power of God; and whether to compleat the Evidence of a Miracle, the Nature of the Doctrine pretended to be proved thereby, is to be taken into confideration or no; which Matter he proposeth to set in its true Light.

It was a Satisfaction to me, 'twill be easily supposed, to find this Author saying with me, or to the same purpose with me, (Ist.) "That in respect of the Power of God all "Things are equally and alike easie; 'tis "not therefore a right Distinction of a Mi-"racle, to define it or distinguish it by any " absolute difficulty in the Nature of the "Thing it self to be done, as if the things "which we call Natural were absolutely, " and in their own Nature easier to be ef-"fected than those that we look upon as Pag. 352. " Miraculous. And (2dly.) that 'tis by no means possible for us to determine what "Degrees of Power God may have commu-" nicated to Created Intelligences or Spirits, "whether Good or Evil: Some Things not " possible for Men to effect, may easily be " fupposed within the Power of Angels, and fome Things beyond the Power of Inferior " Spirits, may as easily be supposed within " the Power of others Superior to them: So "that excepting only the Power of creating out of nothing, which feems to be absolute-"Iy incommunicable, it can hardly be af-"firmed with any certainty, that any parti-"cular Effect, how great or miraculous fo-"ever it may feem to us, is beyond the "Power of all Created Beings in the Uni-" verse: 'Tis not therefore a Right Distin-"Ation to define a Miracle to be fuch an " Effect as could not have been produced by any less

you III

66

F

I

in

m

"

"

"

"

ii ,

to or

otl be

the

"

"

" (

"

" less Power than the Divine Omnipotence." For this he gives a Reason like to that which I have given from the Instances of Miracles in Scripture, concerning which, or the most of 'em at least, no Spectator could be certain that the Miraculous Effect was beyond the Power of all Created Beings in the Universe to produce. "There is but one " Supposition (he thinks) upon which the "Opinion of all Miracles being necessarily "the immediate Effects of the Divine Om-"nipotence, can be defended: And that is, " if God, together with the Natural Pow-" ers wherewith he hath endued Subordi-"nate Intelligent Beings, has likewise gi-"ven them a Law or Restraint to hinder "them from interposing in this Lower "World, to produce any of those Effects " which we call miraculous or supernatural. And how great Reason soever there may be to suppose them under some particular Laws or Restraint in this Case (as some, and among others this one Reason I do think there may be for it, namely, that otherwise no doubt the Devil's Subtilty and Malice would be always working Confusion and Disorder): "Yet it can never be proved that they are "under fuch Restraints universally, perpetu-"ally, and without exception: And with-"out this, a Spectator that sees a Miracle, " can never be certain that it was not done " by some Created Intelligence." Again he

ter

be

th

Wi

In

fu

be

ye

eff

ar

th

se!

fu

n

01

th

01

n

f

h

V

i

n

i

e

t

ter

he fays further with me, and to the purpose which I have argued for, "That supposing "(though this be unreasonable to suppose) "that the Natural Powers of an Angelwere " no greater than the Natural Powers of "Men, yet fince thereby an Angel could do " all that invisibly which a Man can do vi-" fibly, he would even in this Supposition be naturally able to do numberless Things "which we should esteem the greatest of " Miracles. And (3dly.) this also pleaseth me, that he faith, "Tis not a Right Di-" stinction to define a Miracle to be that " which is against the Course of Nature." Whether the Philosophical Reason that he gives for it will hold good in all respects, I am not concerned to fay, viz. "That pro-" perly speaking, there is no such thing as "what men commonly call the Course of "Nature, or the Power of Nature, for Mat-"ter is not capable (he thinks) of any "Laws or Powers whatsoever; so that all "those Things which we commonly say are " the Effects of Nature, are indeed, to speak " properly, the Effects of God's acting upon "Matter continually, and every Moment, "either immediately by himself, or me-"diately by some Created Intelligent Being! This depending upon a meerly Philosophia cal Hypothesis, of the Truth whereof I cannot be certain, inalmuch as the other Hypothesis in Philosophy, which supposeth Mat-

Pag. 354

ter and Form, may, for any thing I know, be the more true, and then the Force of this Argument is at an end. Thus much will ferve my turn in one respect, that the Instances of Miracles in Scripture are not all fuch, as that a Spectator can judge them to be absolutely against the Course of Nature, nor vet to be fuch Things as might not have been effected by Powers in Nature: Which Things are nevertheless justly accounted miraculous. their Circumstances considered, as being feen and known to have come to pass from fuch Causes, and by such Means as could not be thought in the Course of Nature able or fufficient to produce them. And in ano. ther respect, if so be that as God can without all doubt alter Nature and its Course. (that is to fay, alter Matter and Form, if we should suppose Matter always endued, and never without some Powers, having always fome Form or other) fo it be supposed that he may (as no Reason, I dare say, can be given to the contrary) make this Alteration in Nature either immediately by himself, or mediately by fome Intelligent Created Beings, and may (as for any thing we know, he certainly may) have given Natural Powers to these Intelligences or Spirits, sufficient for any of those Alterations in Nature that he supposeth to make by them, but under fuch Law and Restraint as that these shall not be able to use their Power but by his his Permission: For then it will be within

the Natural Power of these (by the Permisfion of God) to alter the Course of Nature at any time, and consequently to work Miracles, even fuch wherein the Course of Nature may be altered as well as others: Pag. 360. That will also follow for my Purpose which he afferts after this, viz. That it can hardly be diffinguished certainly, meerly by the Work or Miracle it felf (supposing it to be to our thinking against the Course of Nature) whether fuch an extraordinary Interpolition of Power, that maketh the Alteration, be the Immediate Interpolition of God himself, or of some Good Angel, or of fome Evil Angel (except there be a plain Creation of fomething out of nothing; which, as he fays, there does not certainly appear to be in any of the Miracles mentioned in Scripture;) because it is impossible for us to know with any Certainty, either that the Natural Power of Good Angels, or of Evil ones extend not beyond fuch or fuch a certain Limit; or that God always restrains them from exercifing their Natural Powers in producing fuch or fuch Particular Effects.

And (Fourthly) I cannot but be also pleased with what this Author has further Pag. 358. faid, viz. "That these Effects which are " produced in the World regularly and con-

" t! " E

" h

" u

"I

" t

" N

" tl

" (

W 77

" 0

" t

" b

" n

" a

" 0

" C

" I

" a

" n

" f

" 0

" la

ás 1

nal

Pov

vifi

fhe

not

wh

for

" constantly, which we call the Works of " Nature, prove to us in general the Being, "the Power and the other Attributes of "God: And again as to those Effects "which upon any rare or Extraordinary " occasions are produced in such manner "that 'tis manifest they could neither have "been done by any Power or Art of Man, "nor by what we call Chance, that is by " any composition or result (be it either " of Matter and Form acting in their " constant and uniform way), or of those " Laws which are God's constant and uniform "actings upon Matter; that these unde-" niably prove to us the immediate and occa-" fional Interpolition either of God himself, or " of some Intelligent Agent superior to Men, " at that particular time, or on that particu-"lar account." This ferving to my purpofe as well to shew that Miracles are a Rational Proof to me of God's Presence and Power, there being always some Power invisible that acteth in such works; as to shew Men that they are concerned to take notice thereof, and obliged to enquire, whether fuch a Work be not of God, and for what end, in case it be from him. "For "that on every such occasion there is an "Extraordinary Interpolition either of God " himself, in order to signify his Pleasure "upon that occasion; or at least of some "Intelligent Agent far superior to Man; in "order Hh

" order to bring about some particular De-

" ngn.

tages.

I shall also say further with him, pag. 361. "That 'tis not a right Distinction ( there being, so far as I apprehend, nei-"ther Reason nor any Necessity for the "Supposition, ) to suppose the Wonders "which the Scripture attributes to Evil "Spitits, to be mere Prestigiæ, Sleights or " Delufions: For that if the Devil has any "Natural Power of doing any thing at all, " even but so much as a Man, and be not " restrained by God from exercising that "Natural Power, 'tis evident he will be "able, by reason of his Invisibility, to " work True and Real Miracles. Nor is it " a right Distinction, to suppose the Mira-" cles of Evil Spirits not to be Real Effects " in the Things where they appear, but "Impositions upon the Senses of the Specta-"tors: For that to impose in such a man-" ner upon the Senses of Men, ( not by "Sleights and Delufions, but by really fo " affecting the Organs of Sense, as to " make Things appear what they are not ) "is to all Intents and Purposes as True a "Miracle, and as Great an one, as making " real Changes in the Things themselves. And hereof I have made my Use against the Author of the Essay, and his false Hypothesis, and have prevented him likewise (it I am not mistaken) of his intended Advan-

But

But now being obliged to follow that which I think to be the Path of Truth, I must leave the Way of this Author, who takes a Way and Method of his own Invention, for our certainly and infallibly knowing, in the Case of a Man's working Miracles, and pretending to come from God, whether those Miracles be indeed the Work either immediately of God himfelf, ( or which is the very fame thing, of fome Angel employed by him, ) and consequently the Doctrine witnessed by the Miracles be infallibly true and divinely attested; or whether on the contrary the Miracles be the Works of Evil Spirits, and consequently the Doctrine a Fraud and Imposition upon Men. He does not at all express himfelf clearly, methinks, when he comes to tell us the only possible ways of distinguishing this Matter certainly and infallibly. But the Sum of what he means, as given us by himself, is this, "That if the Doctrine be Pag. 36% " not contradictory in it felf, or vicious in " its Consequences ( a Doctrine of which "kind he thinks no Miracles in the World " can be fufficient to prove ) and it be at-"tested by Miracles, the Doctrine so at-"tested must necessarily be look'd upon as "Divine, and the Worker of the Miracle " received as coming from God, if the Mi-" racles so work'd be not opposed by some " plainly Superior Power. The Possibility;

Hh 2

and

0-

if

" and the good Tendency, or at least the In-" differency of the Doctrine, i. e. its not be-"ing known to have an Evil Tendency, "are a necessary Condition or Circumg. 369. " stance, without which ( he thinks ) the " Doctrine is not capable of being proved " by any Miracles. The Doctrine must be " in it self possible and capable to be proved, "and then Miracles will prove it to be " actually and certainly true. They are the "Miracles that prove the Doctrine, but in "order to this end, that the Miracles may " prove it, it is always necessarily to be "first supposed, that the Doctrine be such " as is in its nature capable of being proved "by Miracles." The Nature of the Do-Arine designed to be proved, is therefore requifite, he must think, to be taken into Confideration, to compleat the Evidence of the Miracles. I shall also allow and insist upon this as necessary now at this time; but that it always was fo, and that the Reason of Man was always capable of judging, and always might and ought to judge, and had Means of knowing certainly, fo as to determine from it felf and its own Light this or that Thing, not capable of being proved by Miracles, fuch as no Miracles can possibly prove True; is more than I can adventure to fay, and is more than I need to fay in the present Case: For I do not in the least doubt, but that the Christian Revelation

ve en ha cle th de

the I in no tio

Co

Ru ve fro De otl

the wl

havin Me Afi

cle wh

kei lef

ter

and

velation will be established upon sufficient Evidence without this; and that we have a more fure way to find when Miracles are not of God. I insift, therefore, that at this time the Nature of the Doctrine defigned to be proved, must be taken into Consideration, to compleat the Evidence of the Miracles: But the Ground upon which I say it, is what that Author has not taken notice of; namely, the Precedent Revelations that we have of God's Will, and the Rules which God has given us in those Revelations, whereby to know those that come from him; (having first proved, and given Demonstration of his Power Superior to all others, whereby we have affurance that those Revelations which we have, and which have given us these Rules, are from God.) And therefore, I judge differently from this Author, both as to what must have given us the first Certainty of a Divine Revelation, and likewise as to those Means and Measures whereby we may have Assurance of the Power working the Miracles, and of the Doctrine they would prove, whether the one be of God, and the other a Truth of his. This Author has well spoken, in what he faid, Pag. 193. of the Carelessness, Inconsiderateness, and Want of Attention in the greater Part of Mankind; and likewise of the false Notions and Prejudices taken up among them by evil Edu-Hh 3 cation;

un

W

fta

ab

as

CO

to

de

te

by

wl

to

pi

na

w

W

Po

the

W

ab

on

pe

Po

ab

M

cation; and of the strong, and violent, and unreasonable Lusts in the Human Nature; and of the great Blindness introduced by Superstitious Opinions, Vicious Customs, and debauched Practices, &c. and has hence well argued for the Probability and Necesfity of a Revelation. I cannot but think for the fame Reasons, that Man is not to make himself so far the Judge of what is Truth, as to take upon him to determine with absolute Certainty, that this or that cannot be Truth, though attested never so auch by Miracles; because he thinks it Contradictory in it self, or not good in its Consequences. The Notions we have of a Thing's Possibility, or Non-possibility, I think not fufficient for a Conclusion of this kind; because our Reason is weak, and we (it may be) have not made the best Improvements in Knowledge; and especially, because that is undoubtedly true, which our Saviour upon a certain Occasion hath faid; viz. The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God. There may be Things possible with God, and also possible in their own Nature, which to us probably may feem otherwise; and therefore we cannot determine with Certainty, that a Doctrine is not capable of being proved by Miracles for its Impossibility, so as to reject it for that Reason, if it be attested by them. The natural Notions we have of Good Good and Evil, might perhaps give us some general Directions, were they clear and uncorrupt, and free from Prejudice: But when was it that Mankind were in this state? How, therefore, shall we have an absolute Certainty from these in every Case? How short-sighted is Man likewise as to the Consequences of Things; and consequently, how unsit to take upon him to judge by his Reason alone of the Tendency of all Doctrines, so as thence to determine a Thing uncapable of being proved by Miracles, for the sake of Consequences which he may think it to have that are untoward?

I therefore think, that what must have given us the first Certainty of a Divine Revelation, is a thing which this Author in one Case had observed, Pag. 364. (and'tis pity he went off from it again, and left it) namely, the Superiority of that Power which appeared to act with Moses, in his working Miracles; which restrained the Power by which the Magicians worked theirs, and stopped them that they could work no further, but found themselves unable to do Things (to human Apprehension) more easy than what they had been permitted to do before: Wherein God's Power appeared evidently the Superior, far above those Powers which had deluded Men to use the wicked Arts of Divination. Whence, Hh 4

of

A

G

R

W

ta

of

fo

R

t

1

S

I

8 2 1

Whence, as this Power was necessarily to be feared before the other, and concluded to be the Power of God, being it felf unlimited, and uncontrolled, and able to limit and stop the other; so it was necessarily to be believed, that Mofes had a Commiffion from the Supream God, who wrought with him: And this would give an unquestionable and unexceptionable Authority, to all that he should teach or command in the Name of God. I judge now, that from after this first Revelation, the Doctrine of a Prophet was to be taken into Consideration, to compleat the Evidence of his Miracles, and to be judged of according to the Rule given in this Revelation, for the receiving of a Prophet. And accordingly, I think my felf to have shewn in the foregoing Treatise, that Jesus Christ appealed to the Testimony of that Revelation, concerning himfelf, his Works, and the Power of God in them, and the Confishency of his Doctrine with it; and thereby, as well as from the Nature of his Works, made it appear, that he did them by the Power and Spirit of God; and thence argued, that the Kingdom of God was come unto them; that is to fay, that they were obliged to receive and believe his Truth, as for his Works fake, so because he pursued only that which was manifestly the principal Intent of God in that the Law of Moses, according

according to the Interpretation and Sense of their own Prophets.

And, if this were not sufficient to give Authority to the Truth of Christ among the Gentiles, (who had not admitted that first Revelation) there was in the Miracles wrought in our Saviour's Name, when God fent the Apostles of Christ among them, to take out of these a People for his Name, fuch an Evidence given of the Superiority of the Power that wrought with these, beyond all the Power of those Damons, that had seduced the Gentile World to take them for Gods; that now they could have no Reason to conclude those whom they once thought were Gods, to be other than Devils, as feeing them apparently subject to that Greater Power that now appeared in the Apostles of Christ, to give them a Demonstration of its Existence, and to shew them likewise by those who shewed them these Signs of its Power and Presence, that the Will of Heaven now was, that they should turn from their Vanities, to serve the living God. and aroun

And now after this Second Revelation, (which they that acknowledged the former Revelation were bound to receive, in pursuance of the Testimony which that First gave by its Prophecies of the Second, and its witnessing to its Doctrine and to the Power working Miracles in attestation thereof;

and

and which they that had not acknowledg'd the former, had good Reason however to receive, upon the superiority of the Power, attesting it above all those Powers which they before took for Gods; and had greater Reason still to receive and believe, when they came to consider the Demonstration that the fame God had before given of his fuperior Power, in Proof of a former Divine Revelation, and how exactly answerable this latter Revelation was to the Will and principal Intent of God in the former, and to the Prophecies which were therein concerning it), I find cause to think still, that the Doctrine of all that shall pretend themselves Apostles or Prophets must be taken into consideration, now as before in the former Case, to compleat the Evidence which any Miracles they shall work may give; and that we are to judge of the Power working them, and of the Proofs in them, according to the Rule given us in this Revelation, for trying the Spirits, and those that say they are Apostles or Prophets, and Divine Messengers. But then this Tryal thus to be made, does not now depend upon our Reason or natural Knowledge and Light, but upon our Reason as assisted in this Case by the Revelation we have and acknowledge, and upon the use of our Reafon in the tryal thereof, by and with this Revelation and its Rules: which in effect gives

Co a S of bei

tai

ber

Tr

go ful nat Re

COI

of mi any we

me

cer of resi alo or

wh bou

gre.

bat

gives us the same certainty as if we saw a Competition of Miracles in every case, and a Superiority of Power attesting on the fide of Truth; the Rule by which we judge being given us in a Revelation, whose Truth hath been attested to us by such certain Evidences of a Superior Power, that

we cannot doubt its being of God.

Wherein I do not leave Men at that liberty (which the Principle this Author has gone upon must leave them ) to bring and subject the Revelation of God to the Examination and Conclusions which their own Reason may make at this time of Day, concerning the Possibility or Reasonableness of its Truths, and thereupon to gainfay, or mifrepresent, or traduce, or quit them, or any part of them, according to their vain, weak and overbold, if not corrupt Judgments.

Nor do I leave men under so much uncertainty, neither under so much hazard of being deluded and deceived in another respect, by trusting to their own Reason alone for the Judgment of the Indifferency or not evil tendency of a Doctrine : all of which kind this Author fays; they are bound to receive on the Evidence of Miracles, if there be no pretence of more or greater Miracles on the opposite side to con-Pag. 365. tradict it. His Argument would hold probably for such Doctrines as a Man can be

fure in Reason that they are absolutely good, and have an apparent and certain tendency to Goodness: for that it cannot be supposed that Evil Spirits would overthrow their own Power and Kingdom (which is a Reason by him given; ) but as Satan has fometimes transformed himself into an Angel of Light, so it is no great thing for his Ministers also to be transform'd as the Ministers of Righteousness; and in such a case as this, if a Work of Miracles should under a colour perswade to some things apparently good, to obtain belief in other things of which by his Reason alone a Man can make no judgment, what Certainty would there be in this Rule? Could a Man from his Reafon take upon him to contradict the whole Evidence of the Miracles, or to reject one part of the Doctrine, when he must admit another? It would be a Case I doubt too hard for Reason to make any certain determination in. Again, more especially as to the case of Doctrines, which in Reafon may be thought indifferent, which may not be known to be of any ill Tendency or Consequence, which yet we cannot be fure to be either good or of good Tendency, but which cannot be proved however to be evil or of evil consequence; how can we be fure concerning these, that God will in every fuch Case (wherein the subtile Enemy of Mankind might defign to ferve himfelt him Hun the that in.

"G" "Sp "M

" vi Not he fa " Go

" Pe

'an 'th 'tai 'im

" ft and " ou " have " co

hinkles a first the second of

hat Chrij Man himself of things that may not seem to Human Reason evil) work miracles on the opposite side to contradict it, if so be that Satan should design to deceive therein.

This Author's Argument, "That should Pag. 365. "God in fuch Cases as these permit Evil "Spirits to work Miracles to impose upon "Men, the Error would be absolutely in-"vincible;" I take to be a meer Mistake. Not that I think him to be mistaken in what he fays, "That as in Fact 'tis evident that "God restrains Evil Spirits from using their " Power to destroy Mens Bodies and Lives, "and bringing Calamities upon them, "(which they, 'tis to be supposed, other-"wife would) by his having fet them Laws "and Bounds which they cannot pass; so for "that very fame Reason it is infinitely cer-"tain that God restrains them likewise from "imposing upon Mens Minds and Under-"standings in all such cases, wherein Virtu-"ous, and Wife, and Honest Men would "have no possible Way left by which they "could discover the Imposition." think him to be mistaken in what he suppoes as to the Invincibility of the Error, and of there being no possible Way by which the mposition may be discovered: For I take it hat God has left us fuch a Rule in the bristian Revelation, as that a Wise and Good Man hath a fure way to escape, and discover the Works, and Attempts, and Delusions of Satan; and that if any fuch should happen to be deceived at any time, as pof. fibly they may be through over-fight, and probably they will be, if they trust too far, and depend too much upon the Strength and Judgment of their own Reason, that Error is not to be faid to be invincible, for that there was a way to have escaped it, and there is a way also for their being recovered from it, which is by recourse to the Rule and Revelation which we have already, and which has been acknowledged upon fure Evidence: And this shall do as much as a New Competition of Miracles, and a Superiority of Miracles on the fide of Truth could do, should we see it in such a particular Case; the Revelation we have already, being establish'd upon as great a Superiority of Miracles as any that we can defire to fee; and the Will of God in this Revelation as plainly fet before us, and the Rule as certain to us consequently (because we have it from a fure Revelation) as it would be after a New Competition of Miracles, and a Superiority of God's Power shews therein.

I shall allow this Author to have spoken right in an Instance which he has given, as he thinks, for his Purpose, viz. "That sup" posing a Man, pretending to be a Prophet

Pag. 363. " should work any Miracle, or give any

" Sign

" S

" d

" G

a b

" d

and

220

unc

Re

be

the

yet

wit

ship

fay

Ca

by

Mi

pro

of

in

fel

An

thi

for

cu

dia

lef

tal

be

fer

for

"Sign or Wonder whatfoever in order to " draw Men from the Worship of the True " God, fuch Miracles ought at first fight to " be rejected as Diabolical." But I shall "desire him to put himself in the Case and Circumstances which he supposes, pag. 220. the Heathen Philosophers to have been under; that is to fay, as knowing by his Reason, in the general, that God ought to be worshipped; aThing plain and evident in the Light of Nature, as any thing can be, vet ignorant in what particular Manner, and with what kind of Worship he will be worshipped (which by bare Reason, himself fays, cannot be discerned): And let the Case be put, that Signs were shewed him by fome Damon, which was not God, and Miracles wrought to shew this Dæmon's Approbation of a Superstitious Worship; even of a Worship so absurd as that by Images, in which this Power might yet present it felf to him, to induce and persuade to it : And let him fincerely fay, whether he thinks that he should certainly by his Reafon better extricate himself from this Difficulty than those Philosophers he speaks of did, who fell themselves into, as well as left the World in the most Foolish Idolatry, taking probably those that were Devils to be God, as well as worshipping them in a fensless Way of Superstition. I may with some confidence, therefore, (inasmuch as the the Philosophers fell into the same Error, in a manner, with the Vulgar in this Case) fay, that it was not from the Light and Strength of Reason only that a False Prophet working Miracles could be rejected, perfuading to the worship of other than the True God, or to a foolish and absurd Way of Worshp; but from Reason assisted by the Rule given in God's Revelation, which had first appeared to be the Revelation of the True God, by that Superiority and Greatness of Power which had been shewn to render it unquestionable, and had given a certain assurance which was the True God, and how he would be worshipped. By this Men knowing certainly the True God, might boldly reject even Miracles that should be wrought to perfuade to the Worship of other Gods, or to that Way of Worship which this Revelation had shewn the True God had in abomination.

I have read with no little Satisfaction the Things exceedingly well urged by this Author, to evince—That the Christian Religion is in all things and respects highly reasonable; its Practical Duties such as are most agreeable to our Natural Notions of God, and most perfective of the Nature, and conducive to the Happiness and Well-being of Men; the Motives by which the Practice of these Duties is inforced, most suitable to the Excellent Wisdom of God, and most

answerable to the Natural Expectations of Men; the peculiar Manner and Circumstances with which this Religion enjoins the Duties, and urges the Motives forementioned, consonant to the Dictates of found Reafon, and the unprejudiced Light of Nature; all the Credenda or Doctrines which it requires our particular affent to, agreeable to unprejudiced Reason, and having a natural Tendency, and direct Influence to reform Mens Manners, and do together make up the most consistent and Rational Scheme of Belief in the World. But this Author himfelf fays after all this, when he speaks of the Marks of a Religion coming from God, pag. 266. that no degree of Excellency or Goodness in a Doctrine it self can make it certain to us, but only highly probable that it comes from God, unless it has moreover some positive and direct Evidence of its being revealed actually: In which, as I agree with him, fo I cannot but conclude for this Reason, that that Positive Evidence is the First, as well as the Certain Proof of a Divine Revelation: The other I look upon to be subsequent and Collateral: I find it so in Fact in the Revelations we have had: Mofes had gained his Authority with the People of Israel by his Miracles before ever he gave his Law: When Ifrael faw that great Work which the Lord did upon the Agypti-Ii ans. ans, the People feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his Servant Moses, Exod. 14. 31. Infomuch that when Mofes laid this before them at the time of the giving the Law, faying by God's Order to them? Te have feen what the Lord did unto the Egyptians, and how he bare you on Eagles Wings, and brought you unto himself: Now therefore if ye will obey my Voice indeed, ye shall be a peculiar Treasure unto me above all People, Exod. 10. 4. All the People answer together, and fay, All that the Lord bath spoken we will do. Indeed after the Law given upon the Sanction of the Divine Authority, Moses when he rehearfeth the Story of God's Works, and was about to repeat to them again, and make fome Additions to the Precepts and Statutes that had been given them, that he might the more persuade them to keep and do them, reafonsthus, Deut. 4. 6. This is your Wisdom and your Understanding in the Sight of the Nations, Ge. And what Nation is there fo great, that hath Statutes and Judgments fo righteous as all this Law which I fet before you this Day?

The Gospel of Christ to have belief of the Jews, does not indeed seem to have depended absolutely upon the Authority of its Miracles, because there was a necessity for its making it self appear approved by the Former Revelation, and consequently for its appeal to the Sense to which their own Prophets

phets interpreted the Law, to shew that it intended the fulfilling the Righteoufnels of the Law, and effecting better than before the Practice of the weightier Matters of it i But when it comes to the Gentiles, it feems to be with an Absolute Authority: It no where, that I know of, makes them the Judges of God's Wisdom, nor of the Measures of the Gospel Righteousness; but affirms the World by all its Wisdom not to have known God, and that even the Greeks (who were i cor. i: the most Intelligent part of the Heathen 22. World ) feeking after that they thought Wildom, were fo wretchedly mistaken, as to account the Gospel Fooliffiness; the that the Foolishness of God, those Disposition's of the Divine Counsels, which in their Opinis ons had the least Wisdom, were infinitely to be preferr'd before all that they deemed wife. It also requires the Gentile Converts, that as they had received Jesus Christ the Lord, so they should walk in him: i.e. as they had received his Precepts and Truth for the regulating their Lives, they should keep and hold his Truth, and walk after it, and not let any Man spoil them through Philosophy, Color. 2, which might pretend to advance other v. 617. Truths, or to give other Precepts of Piety and Virtue after the Rudiments of the World; that is to fay, according to what the World thought wife and good. Nevertheless it is most certain that in the Christian Doctrine; What= Ti 2

What soever Things are true, what soever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Thing praise-worthy, all these, and these only are the Things that are earnestly recommended to Mens Practice. Howbeit, as the World had not Wisdom sufficient to be Judges of the Wisdom of the Gospel-Dispensation, so neither does it feem by the State which the Gospel represents the World in, at the time of its Revelation, that the World had fo much Honesty, or so much Knowledge of Honefty, as that it might be supposed left at liberty to approve as it thought in Reason fit, of what came to them with the Divine Authority, and with Evidences of that Authority.

I therefore can apprehend no Grounds, neither in the Revelation we have, or way of its Delivery, nor in Reason it self, why it should be thought that Man by his Reason alone has Ability to judge, or Capacity to determine with any certainty, that this Thing is not capable of being proved by any Miracles, because it is not possible in it self, or is contradictory in it self, or that thing is not to be believed, though attested by ever so many Miracles; because in the Judgment of Reason, it seems to be of Evil Tendency and Consequence: "Tis a quite different Thing to determine of the Power that

that worketh Miracles, and of the Doctrine attested by them, from a Precedent Revelation, and from Reason assisted with the Truths and Rules of that Revelation, and to determine of either the one or the other of these from our own Judgment, and the Light

of Natural Reason only.

Moreover, if the Illumination of our Minds be the Work of God's Spirit, a Grace that is the effect not of bare Instruction in the Gospel Truth, but of the Habitual Presence of the Divine Spirit in us, which I think to be what the Scripture clearly informeth, then it may be supposed, they whose Minds are illuminated, do approve the Things that are excellent, as they see clearly the Wondrous Things of the Divine Law; whereas others whose Minds may be blinded, may not see the Reasonableness thereof, though it be in every thing most Reasonable and excellent.

As by this time the Ordinary Reader, as well as this Author cannot be ignorant what I drive at in these Arguments against his last Hypothesis, so I hope I cannot be so far misapprehended as if I went about to suggest any thing against the reasonableness of Christianity, or to weaken the Strength of that Argument for its Truth: I ever thought with my self before, and am now more fully persuaded, by what this Author has learnedly argued concerning the Excelling

lency and Reasonableness of the Truths and Precepts of the Christian Religion, that they are fuch as Right Reason may well judge becoming the Infinite Wifdom and Goodness of the All-wife and Good God, excellent and perfective of the Human Nature, consonant to the Dictates of a Rational Mind and Conscience, and conducive to the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind. But nevertheless, fearing to be wife above what is written (a Fault which in this Author's Judgment is blame-worthy) I cannot think that the Foundations on which the Scripture hath intimated the Truth of Revelation to lye, are to be left for any Hopes that we may have to fettle it upon Proofs and Arguments of our own. Therefore I cannot Subject the Evidences of Revelation to the Judgment that Reason of it felf may make of the Doctrine they prove.

My present Purpose, I think, does not oblige me to enter into a Dispute at large with this Author, so far upon this Point, as to shew that his Arguments concerning the Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine, though serviceable to the Interest of Christianity, and to the maintenance of its Truth in their Proper Use; that is to say, when used in the way of a Motive to persuade to its Belief and Practice, or in the way of a Subsequent and Collateral Proof, to evince it highly probable to be the Truth of the good and

and just God, would not be sufficient to be infifted upon as an Antecedent Proof, if it were to be supposed at the same time, that Men might reject the Evidence of its Miracles, if so be their own Reason should think any of these Truths absurd or contradictory, or not possible; or if they should apprehend any thing therein to have Evil Confequences: I shall only therefore give some few Hints to this Author, wherein I think him deficient in his Proof as he goes upon this Hypothesis, "That a Man may re-"ject the Proof of Miracles, how true or "great soever, if in his Reason he thinks the "Doctrine they would prove to be an Ab-" furdity, or to imply a Contradiction, or to " be of EvilTendency or Consequence.

I say then, that if it were allowed he had so far cleared the Truths of Christianity and its Precepts, as to have shewn that according to unprejudiced Reason, there is nothing therein but what is highly probable to be the Will or Truth of God, and consequently in all Respects capable of being proved by Miracles; yet I do not fee, that the Revelation of Moses is cleared in like manner. And if this cannot be done, we have then a Revelation from God, which Reason would in several Respects oppose; and then not only that Revelation which is not confistent in all Respects with Reason, but that also which alloweth that as true Ii 4 which

e

,

h

n

0

it

d

which hath fuch Inconfistency, must be doubted of: or, which to be fure shall rather be thought, this Hypothesis cannot be good, but is weak and false. Some Particulars, which I think cannot be accounted for in Moses's Revelation upon this Ground, are, First, A certain Thing, which Moses saith Abraham was commanded of God; which was, the Sacrificing of his Son. And again in Moles's Revelation it felf, his bidding the Israelites, in the Name of their God, at their going out of Ægypt, to borrow of the Agyptians their Jewels of Silver and Gold, with the design to spoil them, and without so much as a Purpose of Repayment. His bidding the Sons of Levi, to flay every man his brother, and consecrate themselves to the Lord thereby, for a Thing, wherein it feems as though they themselves had sinned with the rest of the People, their Brethren. His Wrath with the Officers of the Children of Ifrael, who when they had overcome the Midianites, flew all the Males, for their shewing an Act of Mercy, and sparing the women and children; and the Order he gave them upon it, to kill every male among the Little Ones, &c. There are none of these Things but may be accounted for, and shewn to be neither inhuman, cruel, nor unjust, when God shall authorize, or particularly command; who having the Disposal of all Mens

li

Mens Lives, and an absolute Power of all that's theirs, may appoint what Instruments he will, to execute his Pleasure: But how his Command should be known, how Men could be certain of its being his Command, if no Signs nor. Miracles whatfoever could prove to them his Authority and Command in the Case, I can no ways apprehend. I observe further, that this Author in proving the Reasonableness of Christian Truth, and vindicating it from being abfurd and contradictory to Reason, does in a certain Case think it a good Argument to fay: "The wifest and learned'st of the Pag. 293. "Ancient Philosophers (who were cer-"tainly as good Judges of Right Reason, " and of what was contrary to it, and in-" confistent with it, as any of the Mo-"derns;) received and taught fome Things, " as in their Opinion not only confistent and " reconcileable with Reason, but also as " most consonant to it, and deducible from "it; which yet were as difficult to com-" prehend, as any thing in the Christian "Faith." If this were an Argument, an Objector might fay, there is nothing fo abfurd or contradictory to Reason, but what a Man must admit: Things the most contradictory to Right Reason, having ('tis likely) been received and taught as reasonable by some Philosopher or other, at some time or other; at least Things not at all more

more difficult and shocking to Reason, than the most unreasonable and contradictory thing that can be named with any thing

of a Pretence or Colour to let it off. Every one must use his own Reason, therefore, will fuch an one fay, in judging of Things reasonable: or else all our Reason must go for nothing: Nor must a Thing be at all the fooner or easier admitted as reasonable, for the pretence it may have of a Divine Authority; if so be that no Miraeles in the World, can be a Proof to us of a Thing, that Reason shall judge Contradictory. And thus for the Reason that this Author has given up all such Explicati-Pag. 295. ons of Christian Writers about the Doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son of God, &c. as can be reduced to imply or involve any Contradiction; I fear, left he be forced to give up the Truth of Scripture it felf, to those that think they have by just and necessary Consequences, reduced its Doctrine in this or any other Case, or the Sense wherein the Church hath understood it, to imply or involve a Contradiction. For whether there be a Real Contradiction in it, or not, to him that verily thinketh there is, it must be given up, for that his Reason thinketh it contradictory; and no Miracles in the World being to be admitted as a Proof of that which is fo, there ean be nothing that can oblige him that is of

of an Opinion that there is a Contradiction therein, to admit it. Whether, at this rate, the Socinians may not form for us another Gospel, and the Deists reject the whole, is a thing to be confidered. (For if the Revelation which Miracles prove, requireth our Belief of any fuch Things asi no Miracles whatfoever can prove: which, in the Sense of the Church thereof, a Socinian will fay it does; then has he a fufficient Argument, (at least to himself. and all of his Opinion) that the Sense of the Church must not be admitted. And the Deist will hereupon say, that the Miracles can go for no more in proving the reasonable, than the unreasonable; that is to fay, they go for nothing at all, and every man is left to his Reason, to believe as little or as much as that shall see sit.)

Thus dangerous is it on every hand, to go beyond what is written; to lay other Foundations than have been laid; to account, as the Author of the Essay does, that the Scripture-Proof of God's Revelation, i. e. the Proof of Miracles, is weak, if that be true, which the Scripture is commonly understood to have told us of the working of Satan; because he finds his Reason at a loss to account for Difficulties therein: Or to make Men Judges, on the other hand, by their Reason only, of the Will and Truth of God; so as to deter-

0

t-

mine

Reflections on In Effe

for on their fide, against the Evidences which the Almighty hath used, to give us Notices of his Power, and Presence, and Will. Whereas in truth, if we consider the Proofs of Religion as recorded in Scripture, and take them as they lye there; we shall find them a strong and sure Foundation: And if we go the way of Scripture, that will lead us in a sure Path, and deliver us safely from the Delusions and Amusements of the Deceiver; without our going into By-Paths of our own, wherein there is always danger of our being lost and bewildred.

sy devoted what a number; to lay other street bear to ac-

s liste or es much as that shall lee fit.)

to fay, they go for nothing at all, and e-

Lus dangerous, is it on every land. to

in the F In N I S. quality

or as of a bod to said Asiaski ...

estado su bloir evolvera bed salidades

ents not a second of the contract of the

The state of the s

THEFT.

